VOLUME 19
NUMBER 3

AMAZING STORIES

SEPTEMBER 1945

THE VOICE FROM VENUS by DON WILCOX

See BACK COVER

AMAZING STORIES

SEPTEMBER
25¢
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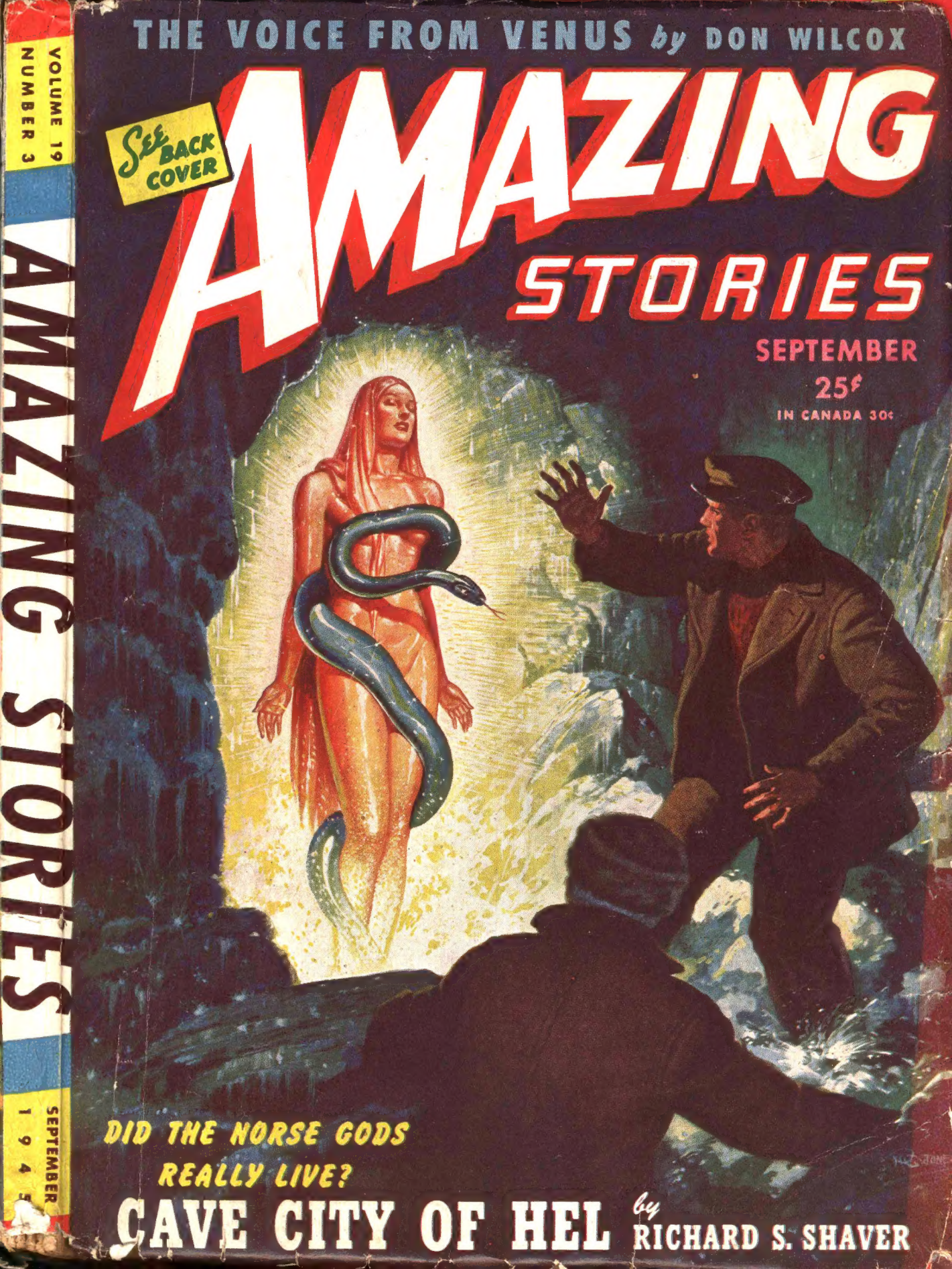


DID THE NORSE GODS REALLY LIVE?

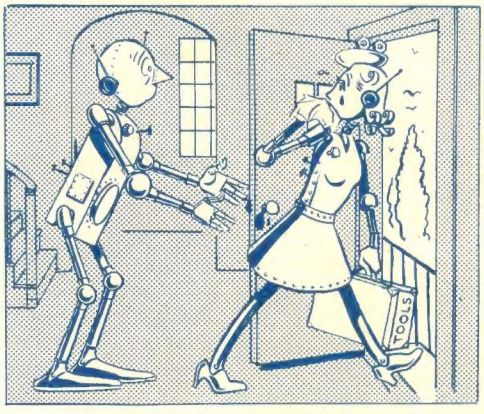
CAVE CITY OF HEL by RICHARD S. SHAVER

MR. AND MRS. IRONCLAD

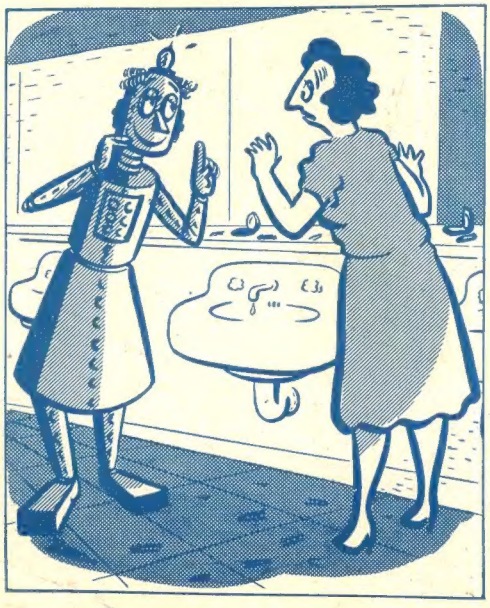
By BRAD

"There you are, Junior. Always remember a stitch in time saves nine"

"Junior, run down to the hardware store and get some 3/16 inch soup bolts"



"I'm going back to the robot factory!"



"Have you an extra cotter pin?"

"But, Mother, the last time I got all rusty!"

The OBSERVATORY

by the Editor

THE notice on this page will prove to you premature celebrants that the war is not over. But you'll also notice we handed on the kick in the pants to something other than our contents page! So you readers don't suffer a great deal.

THIS issue contains the third story in the "Lemuria" series, although it is becoming evident that Lemuria is a misnomer—its scope is far greater than that. For more of the sensational details, see page 166 and those following. It has been the most amazing three months in your editor's long tenure at the helm of good old AMAZING STORIES. There have been some odd reactions, one of them being a promise by a fan group to "expose" our "hoax" (which was a compliment, by the way, because it was termed the "biggest ever attempted in modern science fiction history"). We are waiting for this expose with interest—because we are curious to know how a hoax which is not a hoax can be exposed as a hoax.

NOTICE

EFFECTIVE with this issue, *Amazing Stories* will appear in a 176-page format. This action has become necessary due to the war paper shortage. However, in order to keep the fiction content of the magazine at a high point, all contracts for advertising have been cancelled. The space thus provided will be devoted to fiction.

WE REALIZE that a lot of our readers find it difficult to believe that we ourselves believe one single word of what Mr. Shaver tells us in his stories, but we'll keep on presenting the evidence as it comes in, and you can judge for yourself. However, aside from that, these stories are good science fiction stories, they are complete in themselves, each one of them, and you need not have read the whole series to know what is going on. We confidently predict, that disregarding hoax or truth or fiction angles, these stories will be remembered by readers for many years to come as some of the finest entertainment AMAZING STORIES, or any other science fiction magazine, has ever presented. Which is exactly why we publish the magazine and why you buy it! Our next issue will contain what your editor terms the most magnificent of the series, and frankly, so far ahead of the ability shown by Mr. Shaver in his first three stories that we are flabbergasted to understand it. The writing is almost lyrical. However, we will appreciate more of those wonderful letters from you readers on this new story, "Cave City of Hel," by the ever-startling writer Richard S. Shaver.

LEROY YERXA comes through in this issue with a fascinating story about a square black meteorite which had an opening under it that apparently led to hell. We think you'll like this one, titled "Mysterious Crater."

"SOMETHING For Herbert" is also something for you readers who like significant stories. Frances M. Deegan, our newest star writer, will tickle you with this one.

WILLIAM LAWRENCE HAMLING does a neat job of an amazing session at a bowling alley in "The Animated Tenpin."

LEE FRANCIS gives out with another good one in "Cursed Cavern of Ra." More underground adventure, and something quite different.

RICHARD CASEY gives good advice when he says "Don't Look Behind You." It's one of those yarns that scares the daylights out of you. It's a sharp contrast to Don Wilcox's "The Voice From Venus," which is a neat bit of scientific satire in the good old tradition. To finish up, still further contrast is given to this issue of contrast by Elroy Arno's "Two Worlds To Conquer" which will have you whooping it up in the aisles. Nice work, all you boys! —*Ray.*

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

All STORIES Complete

CAVE CITY OF HEL
(Novelet—13,000) ..... By Richard S. Shaver..... 6
Illustrated by Brady
These two Norsemen fled from the Germans—and found themselves in an incredible underground city!

THE ANIMATED TENPIN
(Short—4,500) ..... By William Lawrence Hamling 30
Illustrated by Rod Ruth
The dryad was forced to leave her tree home when it was chopped down and made into bowling pins!

THE VOICE FROM VENUS
(Novelet—13,500) ..... By Don Wilcox..... 40
Illustrated by Malcolm Smith
He came to Earth from Venus as an ambassador—but the State Department hadn't been expecting him . . .

CURSED CAVERN OF RA
(Novelet—19,000) ..... By Lee Francis..... 64
Illustrated by Robert Fuqua
When the gnomes went into the cave of radium emanations they were ugly, but when they came out . . .

SOMETHING FOR HERBERT
(Short—3,600) ..... By Frances M. Deegan..... 96
Illustrated by Malcolm Smith
Herbert was destined to receive something very valuable, but he got it in a very strange way indeed!

MYSTERIOUS CRATER
(Novelet—11,000) ..... By Leroy Yerxa..... 110
Illustrated by Clifford McClish
Flames billowed up from beneath a square block of black stone that couldn't be moved by human force.

TWO WORLDS TO CONQUER
(Novelet—15,000) ..... By Elroy Arno..... 130
Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa
He had the strange sensation, while flying in his airplane, of being a man with wings on his back . . .

DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU
(Short—3,000) ..... By Richard Casey..... 158
Illustrated by Arnold Kohn
Wallace was writing a book—but while he wrote it one of his characters watched from a corner . . .

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Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones illustrating a scene from "Cave City of Hel."
Back cover painting by James B. Settles illustrating "Cable Train of Tomorrow"

AMAZING STORIES ★ SEPTEMBER 1945

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Volume 19 Number 3

CAVE CITY OF HEL

We saw a scrawny, naked, dirty urchin at a great machine

by

RICHARD S. SHAVER

OUT OF Norway comes a strange story of the underground city of Hel where the ancient gods still live

FOREWORD

SOME months after editor Ray Palmer published my first letter concerning the Lemurian alphabet in the January, 1944 issue of AMAZING STORIES, I received a bulky letter from Sweden which turned out to include a rather badly written manuscript. It was not presented as a story, but as a true happening; and the writer did not sign his name, explaining that to do so might bring serious repercussions to his family in Norway, still under German domination. He had escaped from Norway with a companion, who was also a Norwegian.

Having read of my projected story of my "memories" of Lemuria and of cities where the ancient gods once lived buried deep in the earth, he considered it of vital importance to tell me of his adventure in just such a city located under Norway; he called the city Hel —the ancient city of Norse legend!

I have re-written this Norwegian story, but have changed not one word of the factual material presented therein. I ask the reader only to note the significance of the identical parallels to my own story: of the Atlans and Titans; of the dero people; of the sciences of ancient Lemuria!

This is not a story of the forgotten past; this is a story of today! Of the

true adventures of living men in the city of Hel, under Norway. Hel, one of the ancient subterranean cities of Sub-Atlan! I am certain that you will be as amazed and confounded—and delighted—as I was at this incredible revelation of the source of the Norse God legends. They are one and the same with those of Lemuria and of the land of Mutan Mion, a portion of whose life I so vividly witnessed by means of a phenomenon I cannot understand: thought record their scientists call it.[1]

Truly here is confirmation of the enormously valuable key to the ancient lore and history of Earth's forgotten days that was given to me during my stay inside the Earth as was related in my second story, published in the June issue.—Richard S. Shaver.

CHAPTER I

Escape from German Brutes

THE moon shines bleakly on the snow, so that we are sure that we will be seen by the hated German guards in spite of our white coverings of cloth. If we are seen it will mean death, a cruel, savage death borne before our forcibly congregated people in order to inflict shame upon us. But never have Norwegians been shamed in that way; we bear our ordeals of execution in the public square proudly, defiantly, singing our national song, victim and onlooker alike. Public execution is the sentence that has been passed upon us at that hollow mockery of a trial at noon. Hostages we had been; our lives now are forfeit because a German has been found in the snow, a knife in his back. It is a Norwegian knife, and for that reason we can be proud to die. But we Norwegians do not want to die. . . . So tonight we creep through the snow toward the forest—leaving behind us a mysteriously opened prison door and another dead German with a knife in his back.

As we reach the forest the alarm sounds!

"Scatter!" The hoarse shout of our leader. "We cannot all escape; our pursuers must be split up if any of us are to get away!"

"Hal!"

"Alf!"

"I know a cave—we can hide in it!"

Two of us running . . .

The moment is past: gone is the weird illusion of the immediate Now that has made of all Time just this instant— The fettered breath is at last expelled in a cry, drawn in again with a rush of oxygen to bear energy to leaping muscles.

* * *

"Lead on, Hal," I gasped hoarsely to my best friend. "I am right with you. Where is this cave you mention? . . . *But no, we cannot hide there, our footprints in the snow will trap us!*"

"There is more than one opening, with tunnels connecting. I know the way between them, under the ground. It may be several miles. We will go in and never come out . . . or so the Germans will think. We can hide in the cave; leave by another way when search has died down."

Together Hal and I plunged into the cathedral darkness of the forest. It was as though we two were the only members left of the original party. Of the others there was no sign, no sound. But behind us was much sound—the Germans firing blindly into the trees;

[1] Mr. Shaver told the sensational true story of his thought record of Mutan Mion of Ancient Lemuria in our March, 1945 issue, under the title of "I Remember Lemuria!", and a story of his own adventures in the caves in "Thought Records of Lemuria" in the June, 1945 issue. As this issue goes to press, more discussion is raging than has been aroused by any manuscripts published in AMAZING STORIES in 19 years!—Ed.

the wail of the warning siren; the shouts of chagrined guards.

Hal pulled up after ten minutes of breathless running.

"Here it is! I found this cave as a boy. It has many ways inside it, and some go deeper into the earth. I have not explored them all. The Germans will not follow us for fear of getting lost."

I looked at the clump of bushes in the side of a hill, but saw no opening. Hal laughed at my doubt, plunged into the thicket. Following him in the dim moonlight I saw the black opening, no larger than the thickness of my body. Into it Hal squirmed, and I was on his heels. Inside it was pitch dark, and somehow it seemed warmer. The wind could not touch us here.

"Stand up, the ceiling is high," Hal reassured me. "We must hurry 'til we get to the place where the tunnels branch off. There any Germans who follow will be baffled to know which way we have gone."

Five hours later those words applied fatefully to us. With even less accuracy than the Germans could we have told which way we had gone; they at least could point to a cavern opening and say, "They are inside." In contrast, we had no idea of direction at all. Every way we turned was the same; a maze of tunnels leading ever downward. Even when we retraced our steps, eventually we found the way leading down. Ever down, like water flowing to seek its own level . . .

"ALF," groaned Hal, "I have lost us the way. There is nothing but darkness, and if we do not find an exit soon, it will be an eternal darkness."

"These caves must reach an end sometime," I argued. "We'll come to it eventually."

"Not if we keep on going downward! But every time we take an upward trail, it leads to another descent. It is as though these tunnels have been deliberately constructed on downward trends; as though to go up were forbidden."

"They are constructed by Nature," I said. "Nature does not deliberate. It is just that we have taken wrong turns. You speak almost as though you think these caves are hollowed out by man . . . what a colossal job that would be! No, Hal, it is only Chance that has forbidden us any ascent. Come, let's go on again . . ."

We felt our way forward once more, fumbling through the pitch blackness, holding hands as we had done religiously ever since the darkness had enfolded us. That was one thing neither of us wanted; to be parted and alone in these gloomy bowels of Mother Earth. And forebodingly, in a few moments, the tunnel dipped once more into a downward trend.

"Like the path of a giant worm, suffering from a sort of gravity hypnosis!" said Hal in exasperation.

"Oh, so it is worms who have constructed the tunnel now?" I asked in serio-comic fashion.

He grunted, then his fingers tightened around mine and he laughed. We laughed together and went on, carrying our joke of a mad worm to more fanciful heights to brighten our spirits. But in the next moment our laughter froze on our faces; on faces that we could *see!*

"Light!" shouted Hal. "There is light ahead. We have come to an exit!"

"An exit?" I frowned. "Ever downward, and yet an exit?"

It was the cavern wall that seemed to glow, and in this dim radiance we could see a long, level corridor before us. We hastened down it, our voices babbling excited words that neither of

us heard with ears that were attentive to their meaning . . . until we came to a mighty rock doorway flanked by ice-covered figures of beasts, strange beasts of a startling beauty even through the ice!

There was a three-letter legend over the tremendous door that both of us uttered aloud with an emphasis that echoed its meaning into our brains.

"Hel!"

Three letters—H E L—above a door as big as a city gate!

When the echoes died Hal found his voice again. "Alf—it is not the worm that was crazy, it is we who are crazy!"

I was staring at the legend over the door. "Hel," I muttered. "The hell of the Gods! Hal, do you remember the ancient legend—the one about the Gods in Asgard? Loki killed Baldur by tying mistletoe on the arrow of Hoder, the blind one. Baldur died and went to Hel—in the old Norse it is spelled with one 'L' as this word on the door is spelled. Baldur's friend rode over the rainbow bridge on the horse Skynfaxi and down into the frozen city of Hel to beg for Baldur's return to the upper world. But the queen of the city of Hel—named Hela—would not give him up. Do you suppose that behind that legend was the actual existence of an underworld city? Is this—this doorway before us—the gateway to that lost place?"

CHAPTER II

City of the Gods

HAL'S face was alight with excitement. "While you ponder that, my friend, I am going to *see* what lies beyond that door!"

His knife began a swift attack upon the sheathing of ice over the door. The ice, when cleared away, revealed that the huge stone of the door was partly ajar. We stepped through, and gasped, for before us lay a great bowl-shaped cavern full of strange and beautiful structures. Each was different, as though designed for a different kind of creature's home than the others. The bowl was lit by a soft luminescence whose source was not visible, as tropic seas are often lit at night. But it was cold, bitterly cold. Ice sheathed many of the dwellings; a city of ice seen by moonlight it was!

But the cold would not let us stand and gaze. We proceeded down the spiral way toward the nearest of the dwellings. Some thought of seeking shelter and fire was in our minds, born of the sight of the buildings, though they were in truth as remote from life and warmth as the frozen beauty of snow-covered mountain peaks.

Before the entrance of that first great hall we stopped, a singular, melancholy awe stealing over us like dim, funereal light. Once something of a great heart and mighty mind had lived there, and even now still hung an atmosphere of sleeping strength. A dimly heard will seemed to say, "This is my home, beware my anger."

But we shook off the feeling and went in between the two crouching stone tigers, and our feet rang ominously on the green, glistening floor where golden stars seemed to swim as stars swim in water at night.

Then Hal sprang suddenly backward, and held his knife before him. He pointed, where an archway revealed a thing my eyes refused. Many beings, people of a huge and alien kind, sat about a table—a feasting board—piled high with food. Steps led down to that strange banquet room. It was below our feet in level, and as we watched, still gripped by the sudden fear that had seized us, the figures were more

still than we. Nothing stirred and at last I saw the truth. As we stole nearer, our feet, when they touched the stairs, found the reason. The banquet room, lower than the entrance hall, was filled solid with ice. Those feasting giants of that forgotten time were frozen in the crystal clear ice, which in that strange light, failed to reflect our images and reveal its presence.

"God above," I whispered, "they have sat in that crystal of ice since the world was young. Look at the beautiful body of the one at the head of the board. She is as fair—and as stilly cold and frozen—as was the white-breasted Hela, queen of the frozen Hel of the legends. How huge they seem, like giants. What a race they must have been—like the Gods of Asgard!"

"Let's build a fire before we become like them," answered Hal, recovered now from his first fear of the unknown and refusing to think any more of what he could not understand. "People lived here. How did they keep warm? We will worry how they came to be frozen later, when we are not so nearly frozen stiff too."

WE LOOKED about the hall and several of the other rooms which were above the ice level. But of ways of keeping warm we could not find a one, and benumbed as we were becoming, our minds scarcely wondered at the modern looking mechanisms, with strange switches and dials, inset in the walls. We were too weary and cold to wonder how this strange city came to exist so far underground or how anything that appeared so ancient could yet have strangely modern apparatus about, with switches and other gadgets which we could not understand.

Sleepily, Hal reached out and ran his hand over a smooth spiral of glistening tubing in the wall, and automatically, as if turning on a radio at home, he reached to the corner and turned a small switch. Nothing happened but a faint hum at first. Then a far, shrill, ultra-pleasant piping sound came from the spiralling tube. It was music, faint and strangely thrilling music, as though distant minds of great power were saying, "Be more, be great, grow, think, feel and live more," and the listening cells of my body answered the sound by growing more fecund, more desiring, more enjoying. It was a stimulating sound which mysteriously woke our tired bodies into new life. It also woke our nerves, which shrieked of the pain of cold.

"Mother of love," I swore—"Now I *am* cold! But what a peculiar radio that turned out to be, and what station is that we have on the dial anyway? Elfland? See if you can't tune in Vesuvius on a heat wave, will you?"

Hal twisted the dial on the thing humorously, as though in an effort to do as he was bid, and the shrill, elfin piping became deeper, stronger, more invigorating; and with many more overtones, as though greater instruments had joined in, making a mighty symphony extolling the beauty of growth in our ears. But we were still more aware of the great cold that lay here in this bowl city like an ancient spirit, all pervading, hungry for the warm life in our bodies, trying to turn them, too, into frozen, crystal-held statues like the silent feasters in the lower room.

This threat drove us to seek more vigorously for heat. We examined every recess, and all the furniture—of a carved, smoothly glistening stuff from which anything resembling upholstery had long since disappeared. In a recess at the center of the big hall we found a flower-like statue of a young girl, and about her feet and up over her body writhed a great snake with

green and glittering scales. Gazing at the striking thing we saw that it, too, was an instrument of some kind, and Hal found a projecting knob at the bottom that moved, though with difficulty.

A strange thing happened. The body of the girl began to glow with an inner flame, first a faint pink; then stronger and rosier, till all about her sprang out visible flames, which were warm, yet did not burn us as we held out our numbed hands.

"Ah!" sighed Hal. "This is more like it. That cold was striking into me like nothing I have ever experienced. It must be something strange about this cave . . ."

THE heat was warming me, too, and my brain was beginning to recover from the weird stupor the cold and the shock of our startling discovery had placed upon it. I was beginning again to be normally amazed at what was happening to us.

"Hal! Is this happening? Are we really dreaming on some icy cave floor, dying of cold and seeing visions?"

"This is no vision!" said Hal emphatically. "Touch that glowing statue if you think so! Say . . . that maiden is getting hotter by the minute!" He backed away a trifle, and so did I.

"The city of Hel!" I spoke in an awed voice. "Hal, do you realize what this all means? We are in the ancient city of legend. Hel is not a legend at all; it is a real city. A city in a cave under Norway!"

A blast of heat prevented Hal's answer. Something was wrong with the ancient, lovely goddess of warmth. Time had done something to the hidden mechanism of the heat generator. The grateful heat increased steadily to a fierce glare. The body of the girl turned a deadly white, the long flames leaped at us, driving us back.

We retreated to the door of the lower hall, down the steps and out onto the ice in which the bodies of the ancients sat in their long sleep. The ice began to melt—the surface water grew deeper about our feet. We crossed the ice, for the air was now unpleasantly warm, and entered a higher chamber on the other side which was free of ice.

This seemed to have been the weapon room. A score of strange helmets hung with shields on the walls. Hal tried to lift down a shield but it was far too heavy—much heavier than it appeared. I tried on a helmet. It was too big. There were wires coiled inside, wires finer than hair. On the front a small gadget hummed like a top as I picked it up. I replaced it quickly and the humming stopped. I was as startled as if a snake had hissed at me.

The wall glittered with a mass of painted figures of a shimmering brightness with many human forms of a more than human beauty. Hal clicked a switch, expecting the strange music which had thrilled us before. Instead the figures began to move rhythmically and beautifully in a slow dance like a shadow play. The dance began to unfold the meanings of a plotted tale before our eyes.

But suddenly the sound of gurgling water drew us back to the banquet hall, and we saw that the ice which had filled the lower part of the room was nearly gone. The water was draining off, leaving the great bodies of the frozen feasters free of their long imprisonment!

I WAS drawn to the white beauty of the woman at the head of the board who had struck my fancy as one who must be as was the storied Hela, queen of the underworld, whom I had dreamed of as a boy in the winter cold. Both of us drew near to the dead. The awe we had felt before the palace entrance

returned to us, for these were no common members of the race of man as it is today. These people were mighty in a sculptural beauty and strength. Standing, they must have been from seven to ten feet tall. Their garments were like nothing we had ever seen before even in paintings of the time of the Vikings. A gleaming scale armor covered most of their bodies. Over this they wore a black metal mesh harness supporting various rods and implements which were obviously weapons.

"Do you realize that this place is a final proof that Valhalla, Asgard, Hel and all the rest of the old legends had something beside human imagination for their source?" I said.

I touched the woman who in my mind I called Hela. Touched her cheek with my fingers, and a feeling ran through me such as no corpse should have inspired. The heat, which had not abated, had gone to my head! That cheek was not stiff with death!

I lifted her hand and the arm, too, was flexible. She seemed asleep and the movement of her arm made her topple slowly and slide to the floor. On a crazy impulse, I turned her over and began furiously to apply artificial respiration.

Hal tugged at my shoulder, his face showing his grave concern.

"For Pete's sake, man, keep your head! She's been dead for thousands of years—for tens of thousands of years."

"Did you ever hear of a frozen fish?" I answered, not ceasing my efforts. "They have been thawed out and brought to life after more than a year of frozen sleep. These people were strong, super strong. They had wisdom of life since lost. Help me. It might work. Remember, the name of this place is Hel. Since that proves some of the legend's true, it may also be true that these people have immortal strength in their bodies. They certainly have the strength of a fish, which is mortal, like you and I."

Turn and turn about we flexed the dead goddess' breast, and a pale pink hue came slowly to replace the dead white of her face. The stare receded from her open eyes. Then it happened! The being—the mighty soul of her—came suddenly and sat in her face, looking at us!

Just as suddenly her great arms lashed out, throwing us aside as she leaped to her feet; drawing a long rod from her harness and pointing it at us. She pressed a projection in the handle, but nothing happened; and crying out a strange word or oath, she threw it aside. She looked about her wildly, then dashed from the room.

"Pray God she's not mad from the effects. But come on," said Hal in excitement, "there are others of them and if we revive a couple more of these super antiques and they prove still sane —they would and certainly could make it hot for our German invaders upstairs."

Instead of starting to work immediately reviving another of the ancients, Hal went to the door to peer a moment after the queenly one. He called to me.

"She is standing in the great entrance door, looking down on the city and weeping like a child."

I looked and wondered.

"Let's bring her back in. She might know something that would help here."

AS HAL led her in, bewildered and docile now, I picked up a small chunk of ice from the floor, showed it to her and pointed at the dead. She seemed to understand at once and realized what Hal was doing as he knelt over a giant, pressing his ribs, for she nodded.

Instead of helping, however, she went to the weapon room and returned with a coil of rope or wire on her arm. Then she opened a panel in the wall, attached the wire and threw a switch. A pulsing, greenish light sprang up before her and around the wire and her body like an aura. Then she attached the wires to the wrists and ankles of an apparently dead man.

Swiftly she worked, and all the time tears coursed down her cheeks and she moaned steadily as if some pain were too great to bear. Then she turned a handle on the panel, and a green light played over and through the body of the giant and his flesh became transparent. In a few moments he began to breathe; and swiftly she changed the wires to the next one. Freed of the wires, the giant's body again became opaque. He rolled over, stretched mightily, and got groggily to his feet. He looked long and puzzlingly at us and then about him, rubbing his chin in thought.

I wish I could understand them, I thought. What they will have to say when they realize what has happened will be interesting indeed. A vast sweep of Time has swallowed up their old life and left them stranded in today. I wish I could hear their thoughts about that.

The revived ancient made his way into one door of the weapon room and returned with three helmets in his hands. He placed one on his head and one on each of ours. The humming knob on the brow of each helmet sang, and as the helmet settled over my ears, a thrill of life shot through my brain. The whole scene became instantly more alive to my eyes. The great meaning, the tremendous strangeness of what we had seen since we had entered this cavern city of the frozen people ran through my mind in new and clear significance.

I could hear the mind of the ancient beside me, reading the pictures as they formed in my mind. Too, I could hear the mind's great soul, his heartbreak at the desolation of his city as he saw it in our thoughts, his wonder at surviving so long a sleep in the ice, and his attempts —fruitless attempts—to set his sense of time aright. He could find no point in our thought that told him how long a period it had been since he trod earth.

He read, too, how hungry and tired we both were, and smilingly pointed at the table. The ancient feast, now thawed, glistened with the last moisture from the ice. Fruit of strange kinds were there, and a suckling pig on a platter, cakes and great horns of a strange drink.

"By all the Gods of Norway," swore Hal, removing his helmet and breaking the spell that had fascinated our minds, "that is one thing I can understand! He says that food is good, and I believe him! Let's eat . . ."

The thoughts in my brain had ceased, and I removed my own helmet. I was aware, too, of a great hunger, more insistent now that the realization of the proximity of food had been put into my mind.

"Yes," I said wonderingly. "That is fantastic but true—this food must be so old it is prehistoric, yet if these people can be brought back to life, the food can be no less vital and unspoiled. Besides, it looks better than anything I have seen on any surface table!"

We both laughed suddenly at the oddity of eating food uncounted centuries old, but when we had tasted the first bite we no longer laughed. We enjoyed fruit and meat and drink of a delicacy that is beyond all description.

For a short time there seemed nothing incongruous in this tremendous situation: two modern men of surface Earth dining at a festive board with the re-

vived gods of the ancient legends! Hunger is a great equalizer.

We sat together, Hal and I, like children beside our elders, and ate.

CHAPTER III

Story of the Gods

WHEN we had eaten, the giants whom the queenly woman had revived stood in a group about the one who had questioned us through the helmet, and their words were swift and strange and wondering, and their eyes glistened with tears. Several times I heard the word "Bont" and concluded that was our questioner's name. A strange liking for these great-sized people who showed such emotion for their lost race; for the swift and pleasant, rich tones of their voices; and the intense thought which revealed its presence in the swift, changing animation of their faces, grew in my breast—and I gestured to the one called Bont to replace the helmet so we could talk.

I thought over the invasion of Norway by the Germans and the whole history of Europe for the last ten years as well as I knew it. I also explained carefully the extent of science as much as I could, and my own guess that they, as I could see by their actions and by the ancient mechanisms, were infinitely superior in science to anything now existant. Bont clapped me on the shoulder and I heard the abstract thought, "Have no fear, we know what to do for such a struggle. It is an old disease, war."

Most of Bont's thought was incomprehensible to me. I felt like an ant on a tree when I listened to that mind. I knew it was thought, but where did it all go? I soon found that their thought forms were the same as modern man's in a certain way; in the way that a full grown plant is similar to a seedling. I knew the thought that I had read from Bont's mind was read in that way. I got a very small picture of what was actually meant, but that was much more comprehensible and full of sense than any thought I had ever had before. It was as if Bont were a gasoline pump trying to fill his car with gas to go—and he had a tank that held but a pint; it all ran over, but Bont kept trying to put more in, good naturedly. He was like a father instructing a small child.

I asked Bont how the city came to die and they to freeze. Bont said it may have been a sudden inrush of water from the sea depths—under great pressure and below freezing temperature—through a rock crevice opened by a slight quake. He added that it was more possible that their enemies, the Wanes, or the Frost Giants, had put the city to sleep from some distant opening with a subtle gas, and then let in the super cold water of the sea depths on them.

Through all these thought tones, I thrilled to a half familiar rhythm; like some ancient war chant—the breath of the giants of the legends that one hears in old lays. A daring, reckless vitality surged in me, as if some ancient thing in my soul, long forgotten, lifted its head to answer. I knew that Bont heard this response and was pleased with me, as one is pleased at courage in a kinsman.

I knew that since Hal and I had rescued them, even though inadvertently, it was their code to be indebted. I knew that Bont thought in his heart that his life was in truth our property, and that his energy would therefore be directed to our best interest always. I knew that Bont recognized that we were in flight from the invasion overhead, and that our trouble was his trouble, for we

had given him life.

I could not help feeling elated, as if I had just acquired a new and expensive car; and that seemed right to Bont, who was turning over in his mind his new position as one of the few men on Earth who any longer knew anything. I sensed that to Bont this felt the same as being marooned on a desert isle. For Bont would give all his opportunity of ruling Earth for the privilege of hearing one laugh from the throat of one of the friends who had perished so long ago.

All of these transmitted thoughts and emotions were very real to me.

IN THE meantime, the other ancients had sprung into furious activity, and I gathered they meant to search the whole city for any others who might have remained encased in ice. Bont explained that it wasn't much use, for most of the rest of the city was heated by central heat generators, which would have automatically run on long after the freezing flood and caused the ice to melt and drain away—that the crevice through which the water had originally come must have been closed by a succeeding quake or cave-in, and the drains of the city carried off the rest of the water.

Hal and I grew unaccountably sleepy, sitting there with the helmets over our heads, and Bont's thought in our minds seemed to fill them as though it were flooding in under pressure. Flashing through my mind came a vividly clear key to a language into which my own tongue fitted as though it were mother and foetus. Hundreds of key words became written in fire across my memory, and I knew that I would not forget them; too, I heard them enunciated in a sonorous voice that I identified instantly as Bont's—which was unlike the reception of his thought that I had previously received. I seemed to know without being told that this was to enable me to speak them myself with the proper pronunciation.

It came to me in a flash that I was being taught the language of Bont and his companions—the language of the giants of the city of Hel—by a process of intense augmentation of mental power through the helmet.

And then someone took my helmet off and I rose to my feet, dazed and blinking, as though just awakening.

"I see you understand what has been done," said Bont to me. "Actually it was a very simple thing to do—but we have no time to explain it now; there is much work to be done, and swiftly, or disaster may yet overtake us. Come . . ." He turned and led the way to another room wherein I saw many strange machines. It was a laboratory such as I had never seen in my whole life. The complexity of it staggered me, and I realized that my concept of these people's science had been very meagre indeed. Forces were under control here that I knew were vaster than Earth itself; came from other worlds than ours.

Bont's words confirming this came almost on the heels of the thought, and he saw the startled look on my face. "You are quick," he observed. "The power of thought is facile in your mind. Apparently the detrimental influence of the sun-polared rays have not wholly stricken surface men's brains!" [2]

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[2] The reader is urged to compare this statement with the foothote numbered 15 in Mr. Shaver's story in the March, 1945 issue! It is the identical scientific fact revealed by the astounding thought record story of Mutan Mion. Briefly, the theory is that the sun's detrimental energy field (magnetic field) polarizes the brain so that all original thoughts (which are naturally constructive since thinking is a constructive thing) become destructive under the influence of the polarization and thus are reversed. The ultimate end of all thought in a sun-polared brain is the

HE LED us now to a mechanism that resembled a great reflector telescope, with the reflector a lens rather than a silvered reflector. When I looked closer, I saw that the apparent glass nature of it was an illusion—it was non-existent, being an interplay of faintly glowing violet and silvery rays that formed a concave arc overhead.

This focusing device, for that was what it apparently was, centered its invisible ray downward on a tiny golden ball mounted on an insulator. Wires led from its base to wrist and ankle clamps such as we had seen used to revive the frozen giants at the feasting tables.

"Put these on," directed Bont.

"I begin to see," said Hal to me. "They are going to give us a shot of the energy, whatever it is, that was used to bring them back to life. If it works on us as well, this is going to be something!"

Bont smiled at his remark. "It will be very beneficial," he said. "This machine concentrates the flow of energy ash that fills all space. It is the principle of T." [8]

When the clamps had been adjusted to our hands and feet, there began the strangest thing that had ever happened to us. It was as though the power that flowed through our wrist and ankle clamps was the distilled essence of life itself. As though every cell in our bodies had been given a new and infinitely more generous supply of the energy of life. It was as if we grew greatly heavier by the moment and that every body function, every cell's activity, and every impulse of awareness of each nerve cell had received a new charge of life force.

A great exultation, a mighty pleasure in being alive, filled me. I saw my past life as a stumbling, sleepy progress through a mist of deadly and unseen dangers and an obscuring, ever-present fog about me which had kept me from seeing any of the vital truths of life at all. I had read this in Bont's thought; now it was clear what he had meant. When the wires were removed a vast hunger instantly filled our bodies and once more we went to the table and ate like starving men. The giants ate, too, having taken the same energy treatment; and from the same cause; a stimulating of all the cells to a new rate of absorption of energy which must be supplied.

"You see," Bont explained to me, "the cessation of growth and the approach of age are not normal to living things, but are the result of an accumulative poison that the sun radiates down upon earth."

This poison, I gathered, could be kept from the body by protective measures—living underground in caves away from the sun; filtering and distilling water and fluid nutrients—eating only fruits and new-born animals.

"Which is why we are bigger than you," Bont went on. "We have never ceased growing. When we reach an un-

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thought to kill. Thus, if you said, "I will do this man a favor," you would end by trying to kill him if you thought about it fully. Also, in a sun-polared mind, the power of mental transference or telepathy, or any complex, constructive ability of the mind, is lost. That is why Bont remarks that Alf, the Norwegian, is proof that all surface men's minds are not wholly sun-polared —for he was able telepathically to sense Bont's thought before he voiced it.—Ed.

[8] T—Integration. In "I Remember Lemuria!" Mr. Shaver explains the principle of the formation and destruction of matter, or rather its conversion from one state to another, as "de," disintegration, and "te," integration. Matter in burning suns in reduced to "exd" (exdisintegrance —or the ashes of energy) which fills all space and makes up what our modern science has chosen to call the "ether" for lack of any knowledge of what it really is. It is the condensation (te) of this energy ash which re-creates matter. and causes, in the process, the phenomenon we know of as gravity.—Ed.

wieldy size, we have always remedied the matter by stepping into a space car and migrating to a larger planet."

"Then the Ancients traversed space in truth!" Hal said.

"Yes—that, too, has been forgotten on Earth, I see," Bont replied.

BONT now introduced us to the other men, nine in number. They were named according to their character:—Balor (one who knows the lore of the Elders of the race)—the letter "b" meant be, and "a" meant unit or animal, while "lor" meant the same as the word lore. Balor was of a slighter, more supple build than the others, of quick movements and of an intense nature, his interest in us and the strange situation mingled on his face with the same sorrow that was on all their faces, as men who have just seen their families go down in a sinking ship.

The next fellow was named Cor (one who knows men's values)—"c" meant see in their language and "or" meant value standard, like gold; in this case it meant race value.

The next was Thor, and Bont explained that the ancient God of War's name meant (one who organizes men of great value)—"t" for putting together (integration), "h" for human, and "or" for value. Thor was a powerful fellow, son of a long line of leaders.

There was but one woman in the group—and her name was not Hela as I had fondly hoped, her name was Ladee (one who puts out anger)—"la" meant allay and "dee" meant detrimental energy—which I understood Bont to say was the real cause of anger.[4]

One of them was named Conde (one who looks ahead)—"c" for see, "on" for ahead and "de" for danger, or anything apt to be detrimental.

Bont's own name, he explained, meant (one who makes the future grow)—"b" for be, "on" for future, and "t" for growth.

Keyce, a long and lanky fellow with a yellow beard and a sharp pointed nose —much too long—was (one who sees the answer to puzzles)—"key" for key, and "c" for see.

So their names went, this group of super-keen, giant-bodied people of a strange, sculptural beauty with a penetrating wisdom in their eyes. They were people I knew I could never really understand, but whom I knew would always understand Hal and I. For one understands a mouse in a maze as one looks down at it; it is all clear to the watcher above, but a mystery to the mouse. I felt very much like a mouse

[4] At this point in Alf's manuscript, he inserted a footnote which I will reproduce below exactly as he wrote it. Note the amazing similarity to my own Lemurian alphabet, with which it is identical, except for certain delicate variations in shaded meaning—which could be Alf's own interpretation.—R.S.S.

"The meaning of these names is taken from the ancient language taught us by Bont, in which A stood for animal, B for be. C for see, and so on. A sample word of the language of the people of the city of Hel is 'con'—see on—which reveals the way in which their words were built up. Bont's reference to anger in Ladee's name he explained to me in this way: the syllable 'de' or 'dee,' meaning to grow less, was a picture of detrimental energy's effect. 'De' was a much used syllable which always means danger, anger, fire, or anything resulting from detrimental energy. This detrimental energy Bont explained as sun-sourcing electric which was an invisible force driving through all Earth surface life causing it to struggle in anger and to decay in death and was the true enemy of life and a result of the sun force just as weight was a result of gravity or Earth force. This explanation of 'de' was a revelation to me; I have always wondered why men killed each other in spite of their natural will to exist.—Alf."

The reader will remember with the greatest interest the Lemurian language key published in our March 1945 issue. Also the theory of disintegration propounded by Mutan Mion in the story "I Remember Lemuria!" in the same issue; which is so startlingly identical to the concept on which the Norwegian, Alf, wrote this explanatory foot note.—Ed.

among these gloriously advanced people. They possessed the power in their minds to drive the Germans out of Norway and off the Earth, if they wished. Would they wish to, I wondered? Would they help our people as I thought they would?

THE city, as we went through in their search for more rooms, which had remained full of ice and bodies, was a constant succession of wonders. Like the legendary rainbow bridge, Bifrost, the huge buildings had that magical quality of frozen irridescence, of shimmering color alive and moving under the soft light.

No two structures were alike, even in size. Some were cubes while others were a cluster of spheres, joined as soap bubbles are joined. Others were faceted like diamonds or the eyes of a fly. Every shape had been exploited by the builders to its utmost. If the city had a scientific defect, it was this heterogenous nature of the architecture; but otherwise it was really its virtue, for one found no sameness anywhere of which to tire.

I followed Ladee about like a dog; to me she was an ancient Goddess come to life. I worshipped her openly. Obviously the others took this as right and her due. My stumbling gallantry only served to emphasize the ancient's own regard and loving care for her who was now their queen and the only living woman of all that ancient race.

From a curved way, Bont stepped into a cage and pressed a lever. I gathered it was an elevator, but it did not work anymore. Said Bont: "If this thing worked, we would have vehicles to tour the city in a few hours. Beneath lies a vehicle storehouse. As it is, it will take days or weeks."

As we stood there in conversation a curious, oppressive feeling came over us. Bont and myself felt it was from above. We searched the near towers with our eyes and saw a beam from the bulging side of a building peering at us like a dull red eye. The beam disappeared slowly as though the eye had closed. But Bont needed to see no more; he was racing back to the house in which we had found them.

As he neared Ladee and Hal and some of the others heard his shout.

"Warn the others—dero live here! They use the rays to watch us. We are in danger!"

What a dero was, I did not know. But somehow the word scared me and I ran. Anything which had "de" in its name was bad, that much I knew.

CHAPTER V

Danger of the Dero

AS WE ran, the oppressive feeling seemed to follow and suddenly before us rose a hideous, semi-transparent creature, like a huge spider with a six-foot bulb of a body; a hairy, horrible monster. I recoiled in uncontrollable fear and revulsion, but Bont only laughed and ran right through the thing. It was a chimera, just a kind of apparition. I realized I should have known it, for the thing had the head of a man with tusks gleaming in his mouth like fangs full of poison.

"A typical dero trick," called Bont. "The danger is behind, not ahead. Come on." But nonetheless I approached the thing slowly, all my senses telling me of its reality, but as I reached it, it had no substance in truth. I ran through it to where Bont waited.

"Why in the name of God was it there?" I queried.

"I will tell you as soon as I catch the 'why'," was all the answer Bont would give. We had joined the others now

and all went on together.

When we reached the ancient mansion fronted by the two crouching tigers, we entered the weapon room and Bont slid back a panel revealing a blank expanse of glistening stuff and a bank of dials and levers. An x-ray view of the near part of the city sprang into sight on the glistening blankness. Bont turned a wheel and the focus changed. He swept it slowly up one great deserted way and down another. He was searching for that bulge where the red eye had winked at us. Suddenly it sprang into focus and Bont drew the room behind into a magnified focus and laughed heartily. I was nonplussed.

"Is that what we were running from?" I asked, unbelieving.

"That's it!" answered Bont, still laughing.

The room was a similar one to that which we occupied, but larger. It was lined with strange, corroded instrument faces and hung with weapons like an arsenal. But strangest of all was the sight at which Bont was still laughing. A little, naked girl of perhaps ten or eleven years was sitting before a similar screen to the one at which we ourselves gazed. She was gnawing a bone and her hair was an uncombed bush of filth—her naked, emaciated little body had apparently never been washed. She was a wild animal in appearance—yet she was peering into that great instrument and twisting its dials like a familiar toy!

I leaped to my feet.

"I will go and get her. We can question her—at least feed her."

But Ladee, who had, with the others, entered after Bont and myself, laid her hand upon my arm.

"Wait—there is more to the fact of her existence than one little wild girl. We must not lose sight of her face for an instant! You do not understand dero—we do!"

"What is this word 'dero'?" I asked. "She looks like a war orphan to me."

"I will tell you . . . " answered Ladee, as my eyes marveled at the beauty of her face—the force of beauty that lived and flowed out of her as heat from a radiator. I swiftly revised my idea that beauty was wholly form in the realization that beauty was vital force, associated with form only because the brain remembered that some forms gave off vital force of a more attractive kind than others.

"LONG ago," she explained, "it happened that certain cities were abandoned and into those cities stole many wild mortals to live. Now, at first they were normal people like yourself, though more ignorant; but it so happens that life force and ray apparatus like this, if used by ignorant hands, collects in itself—in its metal—a disintegrant particle which gradually turns its beneficial qualities into strangely harmful ones. These ignorant, mortal wild people—not knowing that the filters of the ray mechanisms must be changed and much of the conductive metal renewed regularly—learned to play with these things just as the child is now playing; which would not matter except that as the generators and electrical mechanisms degenerate, they impregnate the mind of the creature with a persistently disintegrative particle. This habituates the creature's mind, its mental movements—to being overwhelmed by detrimental evil force flows which in time produces a creature whose every reaction in thought is dominated by a detrimental will.

"So it is that these creatures, learning the use of mechanisms, raised in the same room with these degenerating force generators, become dero, which is short for 'detrimental energy robot'!

When this process has gone on long enough, a race of dero is produced whose every thought movement is concluded with decision to kill. If this little girl had been a true dero she would have killed you and Bont in your tracks. No other decision ever occurs in the dero brain. But she is young, and has not become wholly dero yet. She was just playing with you, or it may be she had not learned to use the death dealing weapons.

"It is probable that if we watch her, she will lead us to her parents and the rest of their group; of whom it is most probable that many are dero. If so, they will instantly kill or torture anyone whom they contact unless they are extremely familiar with them and fear them.

"That is why they do not instantly kill each other—because, being raised together, the part of their brain that functions has learned very early to recognize as friend or heartily to fear the members of their own group. They recognize no other living thing as friend —all new things or people are, to a dero, enemy.

"We do not know what weapons the group to which the girl belongs may have learned to use. So we must watch her and them until we fully understand them. For they can be dangerous even to us, as the weapons were built by us and they have long ago learned to use them. How many centuries they have lived here one cannot say."

"There is more to that pitiful little girl-skeleton than would appear at first glance," I agreed with a shudder and remained where I was.

"That there is," Bont echoed my conclusion.

AS WE watched the little beast-girl, she turned off the power of the great ray-screen before her; and picking up a knife, descended the spiralling staircase. Down—down—down till the stairs ended in a level expanse of ice. She crossed the ice till she came to a great pit where someone had hacked away at it many thousands of times. Scrambling down into the pit, she began hacking at the wall of ice and presently laid bare a section of a woman's arm. Carving at the arm, the little ghoul sat munching, like a squirrel with an ear of corn, chewing the frozen meat and smacking her lips. All her movements were easy, habitual; this was evidently her customary meal.

"God of Ghouls; they live on our frozen bodies, have possibly done so for centuries!" ejaculated Keyce.

The little girl was presently joined by others, one by one, until there were twenty creatures, some nude, some clad in misfit garments from the dead, all hacking at the ice and snarling over the ancient, frozen human meat, the still-possible-to-revive bodies of that antique immortal race! Bont waited no longer, but made some adjustments in the screen. He wheeled out a great, globular weapon ray and trained it carefully upon the feasting ghouls.

"It increases our danger to reveal our presence, but we cannot wait; we must save those frozen people!" he explained to me as he threw a switch. Instantly the group of ghoulish wild men lay stretched in apparent death!

"That didn't take long!" said Hal relievedly.

"At another time it could take much longer! Some of our ancient fellow citizens possessed some terrible weapons of which I myself would know little. These dero people might have found them. At any moment we are apt to run into trouble we cannot handle. We need reinforcements. Go—Keyce, Conde, Alf,—rescue the people in that ice!"

Keyce was already preparing a port-

able heat generator for the short trip.

It was not long before we were at the edge of the pit, cables laid to an ancient power unit in the building—which still functioned, built as it was of the ancient's super-hard, corrosion-proof metals. Keyce played the heat ray over the ice, carefully avoiding heating an exposed body unduly; and as quickly as one of the ancients was free of his imprisonment, Conde attached the wires of the green life force generator to their limbs and poured that powerful stuff into them. What beautiful bodies they had: the perfect limbs and curly heads of young girls and boys, the greater-thewed limbs of the older giant-sized men, the perfect forms of those god race women who soon littered the floor of the tremendous room!

Soon there were gathered about us a revived group—standing like a tragedy scene in one of those old-fashioned paintings of too-perfect peoples. Many of them wept as the sad truth of the time that had swept past while they lay sleeping came to them. The bitter dust of that time's passing had covered their old joyous life with the sad, war-mad landscape of modern times.

WHAT girls they were—I could not help thinking as my eyes followed them—Phidias' statues come to life. An ambition to be worthy of them, of winning one of these ultra-beautiful, elder-wise creatures burned suddenly through me like a shock from the green flame of the growth-force generator. But how could I ever match the men I had seen: Bont, Keyce, Conde . . . ? A strange whisper in my ear startled me; it sounded like Ladee's vibrant voice, saying, "A friend will help you, stranger youth. Perhaps an indebted friend."

The great room in which so many of the ancients had lain in the ice was a theater. The flood had caught them at a performance. When the last of them had been revived and the melted ice had all gurgled through the drains there were five-hundred-odd of that noble race living again! A great many more had been eaten; the floor was littered with the bones of their friends.

We returned to Bont's home and now I realized that an activity beyond my understanding had come into that ancient cavern of ruins. A sad, urgent whispering seemed always just beyond my hearing; and always one of the ancients was moving swiftly by me on some errand; or floating overhead, buoyed by a means I could not comprehend. I felt left out, but realized that in their worry over the dero who were evidently living all through the endless fabric of the ruined city, they were too busy at activity which my ignorance could only hinder. So I rested on a beautifully carved couch near another image of the ancient goddess of heat; a mechanism I figured I at least could operate; and adjusting her glow, with care this time I toasted my chilly limbs and fell asleep listening to the endlessly varying, eerily beautiful music which filled the room.

In my sleep I dreamed that Ladee came on her swift independent feet, leading by the hand a young girl of my own size. Putting her hand in mine, she bent to the dark locks of the girl, whispering something that sounded like—

"He thinks he can never be worthy of anyone so wonderful as us, yet he loves us."

Then both went away again, laughing softly at some thought I could not understand.

"He, of course, is not worthy of our love. It is too bad—too bad—" Echoes seemed to say, mockingly, "Too bad—too bad—" and as the girl's face mysteriously floated before me, a vast joke

seemed to amuse her irresistibly, a joke she would always keep to herself.

"Yet he loves us. What a strange youth—" echo answered echo in my dreams.

As I dreamed, another little ghoul like the one we had caught with the dero, came and sat on my chest, shrieking with laughter. Heavier and heavier she grew. I gasped. She was crushing me. Then the girl of the dark hair and sadly smiling eyes came back, and the little ghoul fled shrieking. I awoke.

I was sweating but it was cool. The glowing body of the heat goddess with the green snake coiled about her was just as I had left it, purring a sleepy song of warmth and love.

As I lay there relieved at the ending of the dream, I could not help wondering why Bont had been so merciless with the dero. I had last seen them lying in a heap on the wet floor of the theater. The tumbled, thin little limbs —with their war-orphan appearance— of the little ghoul-girl had somehow made my pity rouse my affection. I couldn't believe the ignorance and ferocity of the older wild men were her faults too, and my mind could not help but condemn Bont for slaying them all, much as I liked the great, hearty fellow. As I thought, an echo not of a dream substance this time, whispered,

"She is not dead; just sleeping— sleeping—" but whether the weird echo mocked me or not I did not understand.

CHAPTER IV

Disaster Strike

I TOOK out my pipe, filled it and struck a match. As the pungent tobacco smoke floated through the room, Ladee came in, a curiously alarmed expression on her face—

"I smell smoke—a strange odor!" Then seeing the pipe in my mouth and the smoke curling about my head, she exclaimed, "What in the world of Eld are you doing?"

I saw my chance and made answer. "Something you do not understand."

She reached out and fingered the pipe, burned her fingers, drew back. All of which afforded me a tremendous satisfaction. There were some things she didn't know, too. Perhaps I could get more attention now; and the right to be included in what was going on. She asked me no more questions, but said, "Come, I have something to show you."

She led me into the building next door; a squat, rather forbidding windowless square of masonry with carved surfaces of heavy black stone. At one of the inner doors near the entrance she stopped, opening a panel. She told me to look inside.

About the room squatted the dero I had thought dead, while over their heads burned rows of dark blue lights. I noticed that their behavior was different. When I had seen them before, the slightest contact with each other had been reacted to by a snarl and a blow. Like a pack of wild dogs, they had been on a hair trigger, ready to fight to the death at the slightest excuse. Now they sat quietly, a dull wonder as to what had happened to them on their brutish faces. A huge tray of some kind of animal bones, partly covered with meat, had been placed on the floor at the center of the room. Some of the dero gnawed quietly at these.

I recognized the little wild girl crouched in a corner and grinned experimentatively at her. She grinned shyly back at me. I felt the force of the blue light; it seemed to speak in a force like a god's wise will, "Peace— peace—be at peace—" The little wild

girl looked peaceful now.

Ladee's voice in my ear said, "Presently they will be docile and friendly. It is within our power to use these people, to make useful men and women out of them. The blue light obliterates evil will. The little girl will learn to love you rather than to hate you."

I felt strangely relieved at what I had been shown. I had been right about Bont the first time. The little girl who had not harmed him when she could, had not been harmed either. Bont was not a killer. He would not kill a mere child who was dangerous only through forces beyond her control . . .

HOW strange a life among these ruins, with the ancient machinery to play with—the strange moving pictures that spoke in such strong, wise thoughts and the ancient music-making machines. What a place to grow up in. I was itching to get into some of the huge metal books I had seen littering many of the rooms. If I could but read one. What a strange, ancient story must lie in them. Like mysterious, magic books in some old wizard's lair, the things had a terrific lure. But what I had seen of these people's thoughts in Bont's helmet had told me that their thought was too concentrated; too much meaning lay in the symbols for me fully to understand.

Suddenly, as we stood there, Ladee flung her arms around me. I could not move—she was as strong as two of me! One of her long hands was over my mouth. I could not utter a sound.

But my gaze went through the panel into the room of the dero. I saw one fall writhing to the floor; then another and another till all lay twitching, their faces purple, their eyes bulging—dead!

In a far corner crouched the little wild girl. Her arm was about a wolf pup, and her face was full of terror—a terror that seemed at home there. Beside her crouched a younger wild boy, his hand in the fur of the pup. Like ourselves, this trio were unharmed.

It seemed a long time before Ladee released her bone-crushing grip; anxious, terror-filled minutes while we stood there motionless. Then she released me but led me swiftly away, half dragging me back to her home. There she switched on the great screen, explaining as she did so.

"We were just out of the focus of that ray. I wanted to keep silent, not to be noticed. The dero have killed those captives to keep them from revealing where the main dens are. They must have killed the guard ray we set. Many may have died. I must trace their ray by the ion path it has left. It seems it will be harder than I at first thought, to live on this earth again."

The screen revealed the room where the dero lay dead. The little girl was still frozen in terror, still unharmed. Across the room and slanting up lay a faint smoke-blue ray path.

LADEE followed this path left by the deadly ray into the far distance and presently upon the screen came its source: a vast structure of many faceted sides; like a huge diamond set in the rock. It gleamed darkly, smelling to the senses of long centuries of blood and dread. A cross section of the building revealed it swarming with shaggy savages, incongruously carrying at their belts the ancient weapons whose every curve and angle spoke of ages of science and the gentle culture of beauty. Their ruler, a big, bald-headed bruiser, hung with bones, bits of wire, and mysterious gadgets, looked like a cross between a prize fighter an African witch-doctor, and a crazy electrician. He was seated before a bank of half a dozen ray screens, trying to look at them

all at once and bellowing orders at first one and then another of the screens. He was just a bit over-excited, I decided. I wagered that Bont, if he was witnessing this too, was getting a big kick out of him. But the huge pile of skulls gracing the immediate background soberly indicated that he meant business.

Ladee took one short look at this worthy, then pointed to the dero sitting at the ray screens at each facet of the building, swinging the ray back and forth, regularly, watching for trouble. They were quite evidently in their fortress, ready for anything and they seemed practiced. It was evident they had fought each other with the old weapons. Ladee switched off her ray; and I knew that was because she feared they would see its ionized trail. It was impossible that these God people should fear such ignorant savages, yet it was evidently true. Keyce and Conde burst in now, accompanied by two girls strange to me.

Conde was excited, and he had news.

"They killed two watch ray before we got their number on the force shield dial. What was their ray doing over here? Bont sent me to see how Ladee was doing. He didn't say a word about anyone else." Conde grinned at Ladee and I was surprised to see a maidenly blush brighten her wise face as she told Conde of the death of the captives. It seemed people never grew up even when they had time, all the time there was, as these immortals did. Conde's attitude was a revelation to me.

"Well, it won't happen any more. We're covering every ray they have and will soon have the power assembled to outmass their shield. The old arsenal has plenty of juice in it. One of those old devils knows his knobs, too. But it looks good, so far."

"If there aren't any flanking dero, unobserved—" warned Ladee as Conde started for the door.

He never reached it. I saw him stagger as a flood of weariness swept over me and my own knees buckled. As I fell I saw the four ancients also reeling, falling. Some strong wave of repellant force seemed to fill the room. I blacked out.

CHAPTER VII

Tanee, My Dream Girl

I CAME to and looked up into the eyes, intent with concern, of the dark haired girl of my dreams. She was busily detaching the wires from the green life-force generator from me, and I decided that I had been about as dead as I would ever care to be, since I required that powerful stuff.

"My name is Tanee. Are you all right?" she asked with a soft, husky sibilance that held me entranced.

"Why, yes . . . yes, of course," I stammered. "But tell me, what happened?"

"I will show you," she said. "Look into my eyes . . ." And as I stared up into their dark pools, they seemed to swim with tiny motes of light that grew until I could see a picture. Her thoughts impressed themselves visually upon my mind. Here was a new experience for me, a mind in tune with mine, that could transmit its pictured thoughts to my brain as though I were seeing them in my own mind's eye!

I saw almost the same scene that had occurred as I succumbed. All over the place the Gods were slumping into unconsciousness, some of them fighting desperately to resist, others being caught unawares. All but Bont—I saw him holding his mind active by sheer force of will, by the man in him, as the others slumped in their tracks. I saw

him, with immense effort, sweep the great arsenal with the view ray until he found the facet housing the giant generator that was overcoming the rebirth of the gods.

The whole future of these people hung in the balance on Bont's will to live as he tuned the newly built rays to penetrate the arsenal's force-field shields. I saw success brighten the giant's face as the distant dero tumbled in a shaggy bundle of death on the screen, and the flood of weariness ebbed from the room. I saw Bont grinning.

Next I saw the young nymph who had revived me come into the room and revive Ladee, Conde, and then myself where we lay but a few moments from true death. The mental pictures faded from my mind.

"That is what happened," she said.

I blinked. "How did you do that?"

She laughed. "You will learn to do it too, someday. It is not hard to do. That is the way Bont gave it to all of us, he being the only one who was able to remain awake."

I staggered to my feet with her help.

"Come," she said. "Let us see what is going on now."

WE FOLLOWED squads of the Great Ones and saw them carrying the inert bodies of the dero into the prison house and placing them in rooms under the blue will light.

"We never kill anything unless absolutely necessary," Tanee explained. "It is one of our firmest laws. In our philosophy, 'everything that can be of use to us must be used, and death is not use.' We do not kill our enemies, but grow a new will in them under the blue light. This new will makes gentle and useful subjects of the wildest creatures, with the same right to justice by virtue of the use-value of the state that any citizen has."

"That is a wonderful philosophy," I said.

"Yes," she agreed, and added a note of warning. "It is your modern man's only hope of permanent peace. You must change the natural field of force about you in such a way that evil will not grow in you. Destructive will is produced in a man because his mind becomes accustomed to habitual distortion and obliteration of the normal will impulse by a detrimental exterior force. Habitual mental weakness disappears when the distorting detrimental force is removed or neutralized by other beneficial forces."

"Ah," I said. "Now I know what a dero is. He is a man who listens to the detrimental forces about him and through him with his mind instead of to his own body's and nature's production of beneficial force."

All about us in the city of Hel intense activity now went on at a steadily increasing pace. As we watched it became apparent that the sluggishness which had resulted from their long frozen sleep was leaving these God-people, and what I had previously thought to be speed and precision turned out to be but the feeble efforts of men whose strength had not fully returned.

The military atmosphere became more pronounced. A few hundred more frozen bodies had been discovered through the city and the force was now nearly a thousand strong. These sped about the city, usually in squads of five, scouting for more dero and searching for usable weapons and life-force generators.

The sadness of the loss of their ancient way of life disappeared, and a determination to overcome the new and difficult conditions facing them came on their faces. I wanted to know what their plans were and I asked Tanee

about it.

"I do not know," she said. "Ladee is in charge of these activities, and we will have to ask her."

ACCORDINGLY we sought her out, but Bont and Ladee had become the center of a maelstrom of intense preparation that was bewildering in its complexity, and it was like trying to see the president on election day. Only the most important matters could be brought to her attention. We had to content ourselves with wondering.

It was inevitable that we should exhaust the sight-seeing possibilities, and conversation turned to personal matters, and I found myself growing more and more interested in Tanee, who, I saw now, was even more beautiful than I had comprehended.

Tanee was tall, nearly as tall as Ladee, but more luxuriously curved, with a lazy, sensuous tolerance about her, and yet a sweet innocence of mein that was intriguing in its contrast.

"I am a dancer," she told me in answer to my question. "I studied dancing for nearly one-hundred-fifty years. . . ."

I gasped, taken aback by this statement, because I had not thought of her as old at all. She seemed but twenty-one or twenty-two, in the full bloom of maidenly youth.

She laughed at my expression. "Yes, I am—or was—two hundred years old before the Freezing Flood. Compared to me, you are a babe in arms. Be careful now, what you say. I am your Elder!"

She was teasing me. And suddenly I laughed too, because now I knew that she liked me, and that years were no gulf between us. As I laughed, I became obsessed with the desire to see her dance. As I looked at her sinuous body, I pictured in my mind the possibilities in an art of the dance that had a century and a half of training behind it. What a wonderful thing it must be!

"Dance for me!" I begged.

She looked into my eyes, and hers grew soft and luminous. She took my hand. "Not now," she said in a soft whisper. "You will see me dance, and soon—in the proper time and place. I promise you. . . ."

My mind reeled at the implications in that word "promise." I was as though struck by a bolt of lightning. Tanee, this young Goddess of an ancient world, had made me a promise that went much further than just a dance—that I knew without knowing. Tanee had taken me for her own! I was loved by a Goddess!

* * *

IT WAS but a few weeks until Bont announced they were ready to begin the march to the surface. Now followed swift days of culmination. Great globes ambled on stilted legs up the winding, stalactite hung caverns, carrying their equipment, their weight reduced by the gravity deflection device. I had since learned that many of their motors got their power from a gravity focusing magnetic field, by which one side of a flywheel became much heavier than the other. This was explained to me as bending gravity fall in the same way that a lens bends a light ray.

They spread out swiftly under the hate-held land of Norway, ever silent, ever unseen by the people. When they came up into a town, their rays swept swiftly, checking each individual for dero will. When they found an evil man, be he German or native—he disappeared—was flown back in a globe to the cavern entrance. The globes, when they were out of the cavern, nearly weightless as they were, could

be flown easily by the use of a jet of highly compressed air.

There the dero were marched down to the ancient city and placed under the blue light, until tests had shown that no longer could a detrimental thought receive welcome in their brain. In a short month of that swift, silent expansion Norway was free of German domination and free of evil Norwegians, too. All the contact points with Germany were under their control, and with their perfect message simulation, the Germans did not know it, probably never would. Norway was conquered, was under the beneficial rule of her ancient Gods, but of all Norway only Hal Bjorn and myself knew it. Of all Germans not a one comprehended the change.[5]

Bont explained their methods in a few words to me—

"We do not make war—we cure it. If we told them, they would make a great to-do; but what they do not know does not hurt them. Now we can consolidate and build a mighty unshakeable kingdom of sane Elder-wise life in old Norroway. There will be a big place for you in our future, we do not forget a benefactor, it is not 'tic' (good business). And for a dark little maiden named Tanee there will be a place near you, I will wager. She is perhaps not so wise as these huge Amazons, but love has a wisdom of its own, you will learn, and that she loves you seems plain."

THAT night a great feast and dance took place in the Ancient City of Hel. Except for a few surface administrators, we had all returned, and would continue to live deep under the surface, for the energy field was more healthful there, screened from the angry, aging sun. In time all earth people would be taught to live in deep caverns away from sun induction and its evil results.

And then came the announcement I had been waiting for—Tanee was to dance! At the announcement, every eye turned to me, and I knew that my secret was no secret at all—but I did not care at the moment, for Tanee floated out now, on the marble floor, a vision of filmy-draped loveliness that swept over my senses like a wave.

Her dance was a story: It told the story of life as it used to be in all its endless ecstacy. Then it told of the freezing flood and of their long, terrible sleep; of the awakening by the strange youths of a future race, Hal Bjorn and Alf Sifson. It told of the dero and the near disaster at their hands; and at last told of the building of a new order among sickly surface people. It was the end of the dance, and never had I seen such a beautiful story in motion.

But almost immediately Tanee went into another dance, this time with a difference that was almost shocking in its effect on my nerves and motions—for this dance was for me alone! It was the ultimate in intimate, sensuous display of intricate, emotional stimulation. Such a dance Earth knew no more! I forgot all those around me in the tide of incredulous desire that engulfed me. I began to think thoughts that were not my own; thoughts that were persuaded into my mind by the display of sinuous motions directed toward an object quite self-interested. In my mind was born the anticipation of such pleasure as no man had conceived of for endless centuries.

She danced toward me and took my

[5] Norway, which had been expected to be the northern redoubt of Germany, surrendered without a fight! Here we have the mysterious reason for the lack of war spirit on the part of these armies!—Ed.

hand, thrilling much too much at her strong clasp. My mind was a welter of strange, overwhelming patterns, and without conscious volition, I rose to my feet and followed her out on the marble floor, to dance with her in a dance so intimate and soul-mating and perfect from practice that I knew all of my motions were dictated by her practiced, long-rehearsed mind. It was the dance of love, and of mating. And when it was finished, I and Tanee were one.

There was a thunderous roar of applause and congratulations and love as we finished, and Bont's booming voice rang out over all the rest.

"Bring on the wedding feast!" he roared. "The day of the Gods on Earth has come again! Our birthright will not be lost!"

As for myself, I was at last the happiest of all men.

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the ANIMATED TENPIN

She sprang swiftly and pushed the stubborn ten-pin over

By WILLIAM LAWRENCE HAMLING

THE quiet was gone from the maple grove. Deep among the hills, in a little nook of the forest, the new sounds grew louder. There was the rasp and snorting of cross-cut saws, the sharp staccato chopping of hungry axes, the raucous song and laughter of the lumberjacks.

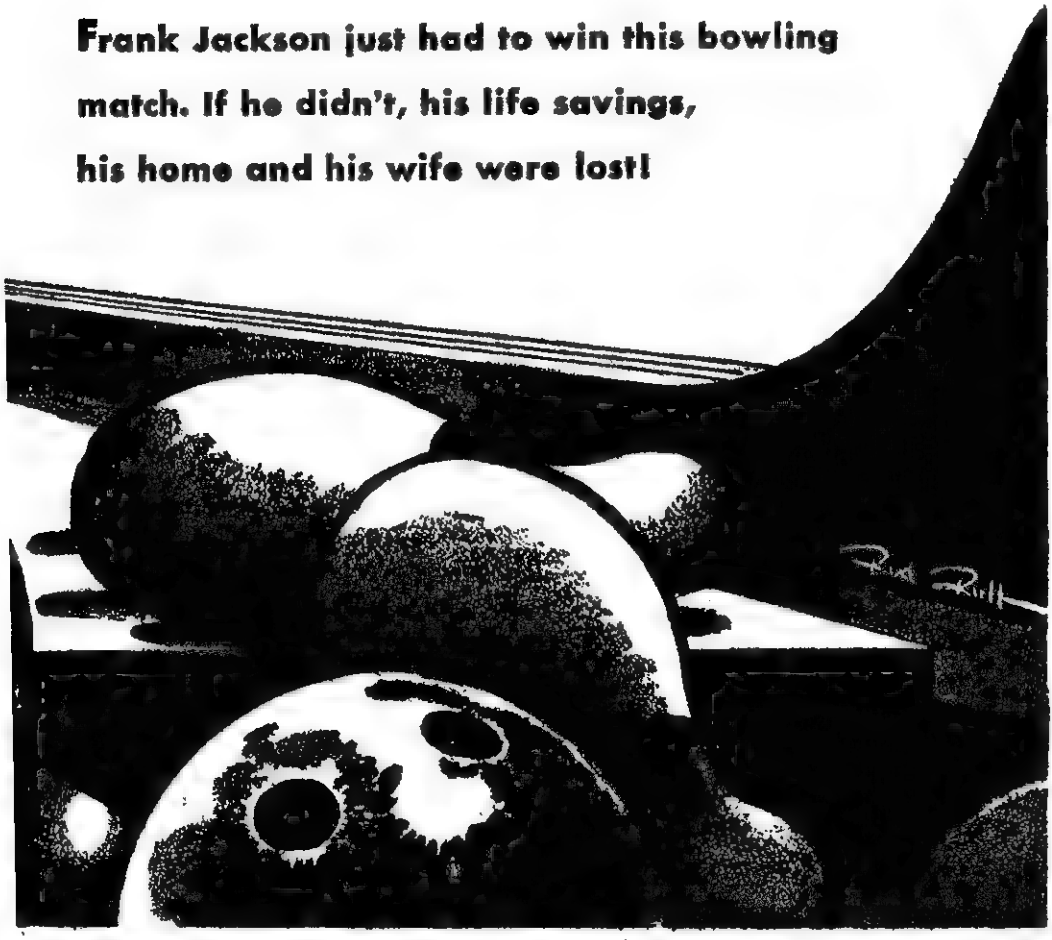
And the dryad wept in the maple tree.

She had been watching them advance for days. She had been curious at first. They were something new in the solitude of her forest home. She had even been happy when she saw them. It had been so long since a human had entered the hills. And these humans had so many strange and gleaming machines. She was curious about them. What did they do?

She saw, only too quickly. They bit, gouged and tore into the bark. Tall sturdy trees shivered under the impact. Shivered, groaned as their fibers parted, and fell.

Day after day the sounds grew louder. And she trembled from inside the protection of her maple tree. This couldn't be true. They were cutting down her trees, row upon row. Their gleaming machines were busy and the steady

Frank Jackson just had to win this bowling match. If he didn't, his life savings, his home and his wife were lost!



crash of falling timber echoed through the woods.

The dryad sobbed in her tree. "My home, my beautiful quiet forest—they're taking it away!" She shook her head sadly and her long dark hair rippled across her bare shoulders with the soft whisper of falling leaves.

They came closer. The buzz of the saws, the thump of axes, and the crashing of trees. Even as twilight fell over the hills they came on. She watched them fearfully.

"Hey, Joe!" A rough voice sounded near her. "Let's knock off for the day!"

She felt somebody move close beside her. "O.K. We'll cut one more and quit. This one looks pretty good; bring the saw over."

"No! No!" she moaned. "Not my tree! Please not my tree! This is my home! Oh, please . . ."

They didn't hear her. The saw grated and tore deeper into the maple tree. In less than a minute it would totter, groan and fall. It would die there on the forest floor. And she would die with it if she stayed. She knew it even as the tree shuddered around her. "Where will I go?" she sobbed. "This is my home—I don't want to go out into the world—this tree belongs to me!"

The tree creaked in a vast shudder as the saw ripped through the trunk. It swayed perilously in its dying throes. The dryad felt the agony inside her. She felt her strength slipping as the tree leaned forward crazily.

"Timber!" a voice shouted from below.

The dryad felt herself falling. She must leave! The thought pounded through her. Her home was gone—out into the world—leave!

The tree swished through the forest air. And with it a nimble beautiful figure arced toward the ground. Her feet raced even as they touched the leaf strewn floor. Even as the crash of the maple echoed loudly behind her.

Off into the twilight of the hills she sped.

FRANK JACKSON was just a little bit drunk. He stood swaying slightly a few feet behind the foul line and aimed his bowling ball down the alley. Behind him he could hear Pete Summers calling encouragement.

"Come on, Frank, old boy, another strike!"

Frank blinked his eyes and sighted over the ball. The pins seemed to be dancing a jig down there. "I need another drink!" he muttered and moved forward dropping his arm in a slashing arc.

The ball sped down the alley with a skidding hook. It caught the headpin and number two on the Brooklyn pocket. The pins scattered.

"Atta boy, Frank!" Pete Summers shouted. "A strike! That's number six! We win!"

Frank turned slightly bleary eyes on the other bowlers behind him. The four members of his team were all rushing down on him with wide open arms.

"That's showing them, Frank! Boy were you hot tonight—a 680 series!"

Frank laughed and looked over at the bench. The other team sat with wide open mouths staring at him. It made Frank feel good just to see them stare. What the hell, weren't they rated the top team in the league? And look at Bert Dunlap—hah! He can't believe it yet. Old Classic Dunlap with his 220 average—fooey! Three straight games they had won, that would knock the starch out of Dunlap!

"Boy, oh boy, what a series!" Pete Summers clapped Frank on the shoulder. "You sure made Dunlap look

sick!"

Dunlap got up from the bench, his face red. He was a tall hulking man with long muscular arms. His southpaw hook had made him the top bowler in the league. He stalked over to Jackson and sneered.

"You were lucky tonight, Jackson. Even a punk like you can get a hot streak. Why don't you get drunk every Friday night—maybe you'd knock over a few more pins if the liquor held out!"

Pete Summers shoved his way between Dunlap and Jackson. "What's the matter, Dunlap, can't you take a beating? Frank just showed you who was the best bowler."

Dunlap laughed. "Better bowler? That's a hot one—I could beat him with my eyes closed!"

Frank Jackson felt his face flushing. So he wanted to get tough about it! He pushed Pete aside and focused his wavering eyes on Dunlap.

"Think you're pretty good, don't you Dunlap! Well you don't scare me—I'll bowl you any old time!"

Dunlap narrowed his eyes craftily. "I'll take you up on that, Jackson. And just to make it good we'll put a little money on it—or are you afraid!"

Frank sucked in his breath. "Afraid? Who's afraid—sure we'll put some dough on it! Anything you care to lose!"

Dunlap turned his head and winked back at the other members of his team. They were snickering from the bench. "Catch the sucker good, Bert," one of them called. Dunlap turned back to Jackson.

"Five hundred dollars, Jackson. Five hundred on a three-game series."

Somebody had just shoved another drink in Frank's hand. It almost slipped from his fingers. His mouth dropped open as he looked at Dunlap. "How much—what did you say?"

Dunlap sneered. "You're not so cocky now, eh? What did you expect to play for—peanuts? I said five hundred bucks!"

FRANK knew his friends were watching him, waiting. His mind spun dizzily—five h u n d r e d dollars! He thought of Mable sitting at home waiting for him. Mable who was so patient and happy in their new little house. The house. He thought of the mortgage payment that was due the following week. A five hundred dollar payment that had to be met, or else. He thought of the five hundred he had carefully saved up to meet that payment. It would take him months to raise another sum like that—and then it would be too late. He couldn't risk it.

"What's the matter, Jackson, you turning yellow?" Dunlap jeered.

Frank swayed lightly on his feet. His eyes caught those of Pete Summers. Pete was looking at him intently—waiting. So were the others. And what he saw in their faces told him he couldn't back down. He felt his throat tighten for he knew he had to. Mable and the house . . .

"You better take a drink, Jackson, you look a little pale!"

Dimly Frank heard the sneer. Almost automatically he raised the glass to his lips and drained it. It burned in his throat, reached his stomach and started a fire. It went to his head, a flaming buoyancy, and he suddenly didn't give a damn. Hell, hadn't he just trimmed Dunlap good and proper? So what if he did bet the five hundred he and Mable deposited in the bank. He was going to win, wasn't he? He'd show Dunlap.

"O.K. you got a bet, Dunlap. Five hundred bucks!"

The words were out of his mouth before he knew he was saying them.

And then it was too late. Pete Summers was clapping him on the back with warm enthusiasm. And dimly he heard Bert Dunlap laughing.

"See you tomorrow morning at ten, Jackson. Don't try and back out—I've got witnesses! Remember, ten tomorrow morning!"

Everything was a whirl of sound and vision after that. He didn't remember leaving the bowling alleys. When he came to, he was walking down a silent residential street. He glanced at his watch. It was close to midnight. He shook his head and plodded on. With every step memory came back. The bowling alley. His 680 series. Dunlap. The challenge. Five hundred dollars . . .

Five hundred dollars! He remembered now. Good Lord—he had bet that money on a three-game match with Dunlap for tomorrow morning! The money he had saved to meet the mortgage payment. Mable!

He was cold sober when he reached home.

"WHAT'S the matter, Frank, aren't you going to eat any breakfast?" Mable Jackson looked across the table at her husband. He was slumped forward in his chair idly toying with a spoon. He looked up.

"Huh? What did you say, honey?"

She smiled at him and shook her head. He watched the dark silken hair flow around her shoulders.

"I asked you if you were hungry. But I don't suppose you are. You should have a hangover, you know. You were drinking last night."

He groaned and slumped further down in the chair.

"Well, you don't have to take it so hard, I'm not going to bite your head off about it. You can have a good time with the boys—once in a while. Which reminds me, are you going down to the bank this morning and draw out that five hundred dollars for the house? . . . Why, what's the matter Frank!"

He had groaned and for a moment it seemed as if he were going to slip under the table. He turned agonized eyes up toward his wife. She was frowning.

"What are you looking so glum about—you almost look as if the bank burned down during the night and your money went with it!" She laughed and stirred her coffee. "You know, I really don't deserve to be so happy, Frank—I never thought I'd be happy again at one time . . ." Her voice trailed off and then picked up again. She seemed to be looking straight through her husband, as if she didn't see him for the moment.

"It's a terrible thing to lose your home—everything. It all seems like a terrible nightmare to me now—almost as if it were some terrible dream. I sometimes wonder just what you must have thought when you found me sick and lonely out in the hills. That wasn't a very nice start for your vacation—but I'm so glad you did find me, because I found you and a new life . . . Frank! You haven't heard a word I said!"

He straightened up in his chair and fidgeted uncomfortably. "Yes, I did, dear. Yes."

"Well, then," she said lightly. "You still haven't answered my question about the money. Are you going to draw it out this morning? You know, I'm simply in love with this house. I was so glad when you agreed to build it entirely of maple—it is a nice wood, don't you think?"

He nodded absently and looked away. "Honey," he said, clearing his throat, "there's something I've got to tell you."

She waited expectantly. He fidgeted again.

"About that money . . . I, well, I think we better wait a while, before we pay that mortgage."

"Wait?" she frowned. "I'm afraid I don't understand. We can't wait; you know the payment is due next week—nothing has happened to the money, has it?"

HIS FACE was twisted in agony. And his heart twisted as he blurted out what had happened at the bowling alley the night before. She sat very still, listening. Then, after he finished and turned his eyes away, she spoke slowly.

"Do you mean to say that you bet every dollar we have in the bank on a bowling game with Bert Dunlap? My God, Frank, do you realize what you've done? Bert Dunlap is one of the best bowlers in the city! You were just lucky last night in that league game—You were—"

"I know, I know!" he groaned. "I was drunk, why don't you say it? I was also a fool—but I did it, and it's too late now. I've got to go through with it—and I know better than you how small a chance I have of beating Dunlap. If only I hadn't been drinking . . ."

She looked at him. With wistful eyes and small brimming tears. She wanted to cry bitterly, but somehow she couldn't. The way he sat there, miserable and honest about it, she couldn't hurt him any more. But inside her she felt a gnawing pain again. She had felt that once before. Once before when her home had been taken from her. And now . . .

"What time did you say the match was, Frank?" She tried to keep her voice steady.

"Ten," he replied.

She looked at her tiny wrist watch. "It's nine thirty already," she told him. "You better get started."

He pushed his chair back and started pacing the floor beside her. "I—I'm sorry, honey. I'll do my best—want to come along?"

She shook her head. "I've got to straighten up the house first. I'll walk down a little later. Frank, you've got to win!"

He nodded gloomily. "Yes, I've got to. Keep your fingers crossed."

She watched him leave the house and plod dejectedly on up the street.

THEY were all there waiting for him. Pete Summers, the rest of his league team, Bert Dunlap and his group—and a packed gallery.

Frank gulped nervously as he saw countless eyes watch him approach. Somehow the word had gotten around. It seemed like everybody in town was here to see the match. Five hundred dollars!

"Hah! You showed up after all!" Bert Dunlap snorted. "Sober too!"

Frank managed to smile. "Sure I showed up. You weren't nervous were you? If you care to back out I'll still give you a chance."

That was adding insult to injury, Frank knew. He wished to hell Dunlap would back out.

"That's a hot one!" Dunlap snorted. "Get your bowling ball, punk. I've got some shopping to do with your money in about an hour!"

Frank turned away before Dunlap could see the misery that was in his eyes. Pete Summers came up alongside him and grabbed his arm.

"Come on, Frank, I've got your shoes on the bench with your ball. Don't let him try and scare you—you can beat him!"

"You can beat him. Sure, what the hell. Who cares about his 220 average. You've got a 150 average, haven't you?

Hah! That's a hot one! Five hundred bucks . . ."

"You going to sit there all day?"

Bert Dunlap was chalking his fingers. Frank finished lacing his shoes and nodded. "I'm ready." Both players agreed to abide by league rules for the match.

It was a kaleidoscope of sound and vision from that time on. Frank felt his hand sweating every time he gripped the ball and let it go on the foul line. He heard the cheers when Dunlap's ball rocketed down the alley sweeping the pins before it. He heard the groans and laughter when he found himself topped frame after frame. At the beginning of the ninth he glanced at the score sheet. Dunlap had a solid strike pattern from the first. He looked at his own. He had 99 in the seventh with a strike on board. He was only a hundred and some pins behind.

"Come on, Frank, settle down—you're nervous as a cat!" Dimly he heard Pete Summers shouting encouragement. But it wasn't any use. The pins seemed to waver before his eyes. He couldn't sight them or the spot he had picked in the interlocking slats of the alley. He picked up a lucky spare, then blew the tenth frame with a 4, 6, 7, 10 railroad. His score was chalked up as 141. He looked at Dunlap's.

A 260 total glared out at him.

"What's the matter, Jackson, you look a little sick!" Dunlap laughed loudly. "Sure you don't need a drink?"

Frank wanted to wipe that sneer off of Dunlap's face. But all he could think of was the five hundred dollars he had bet. The money that he was sure to lose now—with two more games to go. He wiped his hands on the towel beside the score board, but somehow he couldn't get them dry. He knew his face was beaded with sweat too. He felt wet all over.

"Frank."

He turned his head slowly. Mable was standing behind the bench. He managed a sickly grin. "Hello, honey. Wish you hadn't come."

She looked at the score of the first game. Her face paled. "You've got to win, Frank—you've got to!"

"Hey, Jackson—you ready?"

Frank pressed his wife's hand and turned back to the alley. Dunlap had started the second game.

BEHIND the bench Mable Jackson watched tensely as the frames started adding up. Her heart went cold as she saw her husband falter on the foul line, frame after frame. Dunlap was sure, swift, his southpaw hook sweeping the pins before it.

Frame after frame. Pins, flashing arms, pins, strikes for Dunlap, pins, railroads for Frank, pins.

Pins.

Her eyes held them. Ten pieces of wood. Bottle necks of wood. Wood. And she felt it. Something out of the past. Something calling her.

"Looks like I'm licked, honey."

She heard the voice dimly. She shook her head and found Frank, his face wreathed with sweat, looking hopelessly at her. She glanced past him at the score sheet. She gasped. Dunlap had a 230 game—Frank had 150.

"I'm one-hundred-ninety-nine pins down on him, Mable, with one more game to roll. I'm licked. We lose the money and—our home!"

Home. We lose our home. She heard the words. Abruptly she remembered another home. Realization swept over her in a wave. And with it an urge, a vague nebulous whisper.

Excitement throbbing within her, Mable watched her husband turn wearily back toward the alley to begin the final game.

. . . Dunlap started the first frame. It was a perfect delivery. The ball hooked smoothly into the pocket. People were shouting strike even as the ball hit. The pins swept away.

All but the tenpin.

It rocked crazily around and remained upright. Dunlap stared at it and cursed softly to himself. It was his first tap of the series. He threw his spare ball.

It happened fast. So fast it was hard to follow. The ball rocketed down the alley straight for the tenpin. The pin seemed to be hit, but when the ball shot past, the pin was still standing there.

Dunlap stared foolishly. "Well I'll be damned! I could have sworn . . ."

Frank threw his first ball.

It was a skidding hook sliding off on the Brooklyn side. It missed the headpin completely glancing off of the two-four pocket. Pins scattered. It looked like a five count. But it wasn't. The tenpin shot into the air and landed spinning in the middle of the remaining pins. They scattered.

"A strike!" Pete Summers shouted. "Man, what a strike!"

Frank Jackson turned, a grin on his face. He watched Dunlap throw his second frame.

It should have been a strike. But the tenpin remained wobbling upright. Dunlap swore and tossed his spare ball. He was a little nervous. The ball hooked sharply and caught the pin a glancing blow on the gutter side. It should have been a spare. But it wasn't. The tenpin slid tottering across the alley and remained upright on the 7 spot. A howl went up from the gallery.

Frank bowled. A strike, the headpin scattering the others in a freak rebound off the sideboards . . . All except the tenpin, which leaned slowly and fell by itself.

By the end of the eighth frame Dunlap was sweating. He had eight solid blows with nine pin counts. Frank Jackson, seldom hitting the headpin, had eight strikes.

BY THIS time the gallery was on its feet. Something had happened down there on the alley. The underdog had come back in a freak streak of bowling luck. People couldn't get their eyes off that weird tenpin—it seemed as if the piece of wood were alive, dodging Dunlap's ball, and making up for what Jackson's missed.

Frank glanced jubilantly over toward the bench. "Mable!" he called. But she wasn't there. He frowned and searched the gallery. She wasn't there either.

"Come on, Frank, you're up!" he heard Pete call.

His arm was steady now. He sighted along the pins, found his spot in the boarding of the alley and rolled.

Strike.

Dunlap rolled. Again the tenpin tottered, remained erect. Again his spare ball missed.

The gallery howled.

The scene was whirling through Frank Jackson's mind. He couldn't believe his eyes. It was impossible, but true. He was heading for a perfect game!

The last frame. Dunlap took his time. He rolled, slowly, carefully this time. His ball sped smoothly, accurately, hooked into the pocket—a perfect strike ball!

But the tenpin was still standing.

Dunlap howled. He stamped his foot angrily. "There's something wrong with this alley!" he shouted. The crowd booed him. He picked up his spare ball.

A hush fell over the crowd. Dunlap's hand shook as he timed the ball. He needed this spare. He rolled.

There was no doubt about it. It was

rushing straight down on the tenpin. It couldn't miss. It didn't.

The ball hit the tenpin square in the middle. The pin shot into the air. It caromed off the setter, rolled crazily on its side toward the gutter, rolled off . . . *then bounced back and stood erect on the alley.*

The gallery was too stunned to move. Dunlap couldn't have moved if he wanted to. He stood riveted to the spot staring at the tenpin. His mouth was hanging open foolishly. Frank shoved him aside.

"What's the matter, Dunlap, you look a little sick!"

The official scorekeeper stood up. "Wait a minute, Frank. Don't crow over that one. It goes down as a spare."

Frank swallowed, turned to the scorekeeper. "A spare? But the pin's still standing!"

"Down is down, according to league rules, which were agreed as applicable to this match," said the scorekeeper. "Once the pin is down, the play is over. It's a spare."

Frank's heart sank. That would give Dunlap 81 in the ninth frame, with a spare up. That was 91, plus whatever Dunlap got on his last ball. It was possible for Dunlap to get 101. Even a 300 game would fall short of winning the match if that happened. Why . . . his only hope was another tap, a ninepin count, which would give Dunlap exactly 100.

To be so close . . .

Frank's throat tightened. He'd never rolled a 300 game in his life. How could he expect one now? It was too much . . . the one chance in a billion. But he had to horse it through. He repeated his confident words:

"What's the matter, Dunlap, you look a little sick!"

"Not so sick!" said Dunlap, encouraged now. It was obvious that he had been going through the same mental calisthenics concerning the possibilities in the scores as they now stood. Another spare and he couldn't lose; and even if he blew his final ball, Jackson would have to get that sensational bowling score, a perfect game, to win. Dunlap even grinned as he threw his final ball.

It was perfect. In the pocket like a tornado.

AND the tenpin stood. Stood firm as the Rock of Gibraltar—and it had been hit solidly by at least three pins!

Dunlap was white as a sheet. He *was* sick. Sick because through the weirdest set of circumstances ever seen on a bowling alley, a beaten opponent still had a chance to win; even if it were the slimmest of all chances.

Dunlap was sick. But he got a lot sicker when Frank threw a head-on split ball that turned into a strike. He got still sicker when Jackson rolled his eleventh frame with a Brooklyn four-pin hit that magically turned into a strike. But he whooped with joy when Frank threw his final ball. Like many bowlers in the pinch, Frank had cracked.

It was a bad ball. Frank had eleven strikes marked up, needed only one more to win, but this was a blow, definitely.

The ball failed to hook. It rolled straight as a die for the tenpin. Frank himself groaned as he saw the ball hit the pin. But his groan changed to a gasp of astonishment as he saw the tenpin loft into the air and careen dizzily into the rest of the pins, scattering them off the alley. A strike on a tenpin hit!

And then Pete was thumping him on the back and shouting into his ear. "You did it! Frank, you did it with the help of a perfect game on a miracle! You've won the series by one pin!

"Huh?" Frank looked at the figures on the score sheet. The total pin count was up including the last game. Dunlap had rolled a flat 100 making his total 590. Jackson's own total with the 300 game was 591!

He looked over at Dunlap. That man was a sorry sight. His fingers were fumbling with a thick wallet, extracting bills. Frank walked over to him.

"I admit it was luck," he said, "but a bet's a bet!"

Dunlap didn't say a word. He handed over the money and stared stupidly down at the alley. Jackson, his back being slapped by a score of hands, turned toward the bench. Mable was standing there, smiling.

"Mable!" he shouted, waving the money in the air. "I won! I beat him by a one-pin margin!"

"He beat him with a lucky tenpin!" Pete Summers hollered.

And then she was in Frank's arms, crying happily.

"You should have been here, honey. I've never had a run of luck like that in my life! I tried to find you but you had left. Where did you go?"

She smiled and wiped the tears from her face. "I was here, Frank. I was busy—watching."

He waved the money before her eyes. "Look, honey, we've got all this dough to spend—just name anything you want and I'll buy it!"

There was a faraway look in her eyes. "Buy me that set of bowling pins, Frank," she said.

He looked stupidly at her. "Huh? Did you say to buy those bowling pins? Why?"

She turned her head away looking down the alley. "I want them for a souvenir—to keep in our home."

He nodded, laughing. "That's a good idea, honey, those pins mean something to me, too, right now!"

And then the crowd had pulled them apart, congratulating the winner. She looked wistfully after him. Yes, those pins meant something to him. But they meant infinitely more to her. She could never tell him how much. He wouldn't believe it anyway. For she saw more than a set of pins standing in a bowling alley. She saw a sturdy maple tree that a dryad had once inhabited. A tree that had been cut down. Wood that had been shaped into tenpins.

The dryad in her had also found its home.

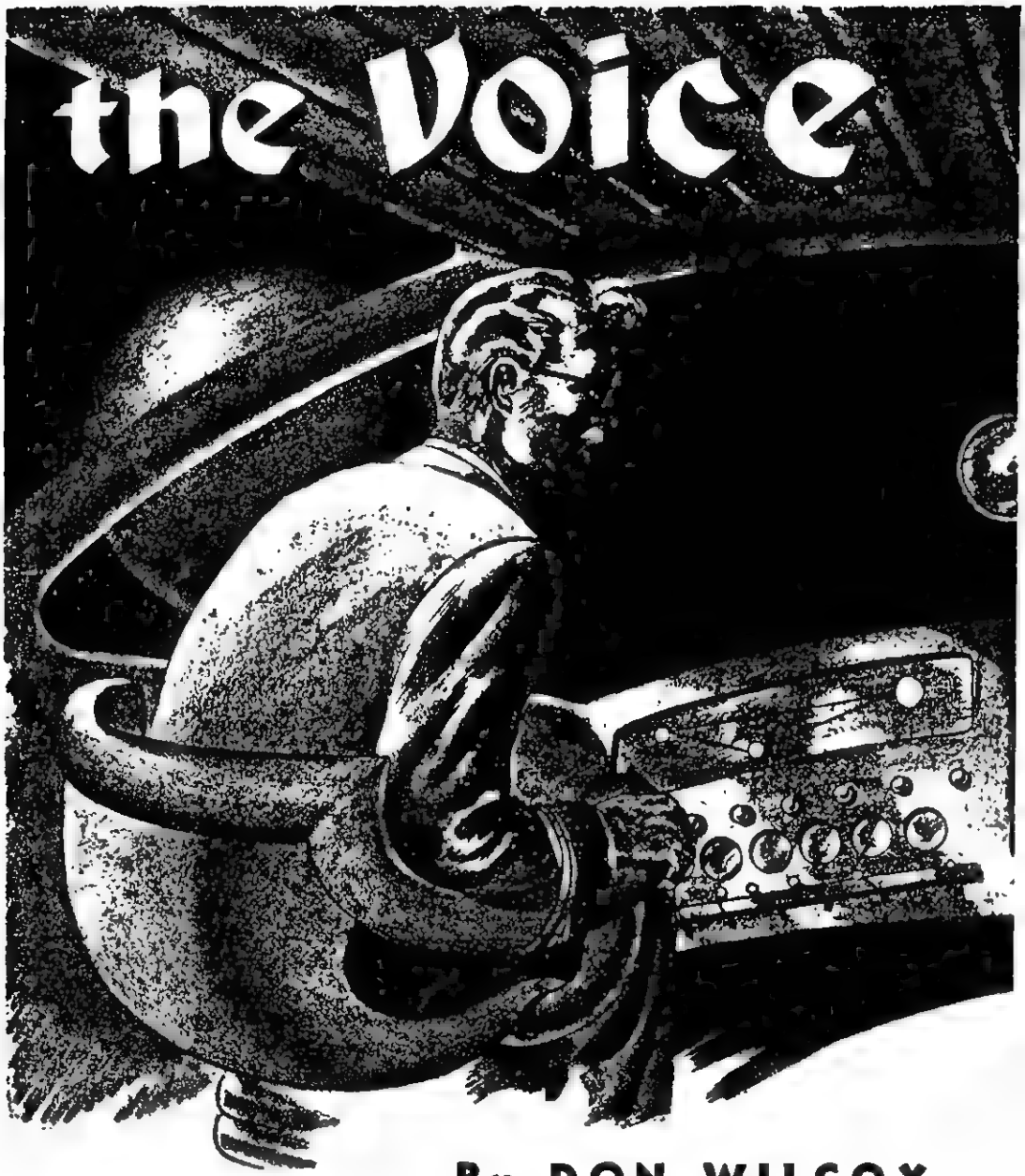
THE LIVING DRILL

LIKE one of Ripley's famous "Believe it or not" subjects, there exists a strange member of the oyster family which makes its home inside rocks. The most peculiar part of this activity lies in the fact that the pholad, as it is known to science, virtually builds its own prison. The very young pholad begins grinding his way into a rock when no bigger than a pin. The opening which he leaves as evidence is a tiny round hole. It apparently makes no difference to the pholad just what kind of stone he tackles. The animals have been found in different kinds of rock varying in hardness.

How the animal works its way into hard rock is still quite a mystery. Its only equipment is the delicate lime shell with tiny serrated edges with which the cutting is done. Some scientists claim that the pholad secretes an acid which helps disintegrate the rock. This raises an obvious question—wouldn't the acid break down the lime shell more quickly than it could destroy the rock into which the animal is burrowing?

Once inside the rock, the pholad enlarges his home as he himself grows in size. Although the mature animal may be several inches in diameter, the opening on the outside of the rock still remains as tiny as when the very young pholad first made his way inside. This narrow passageway acts as a siphon by means of which water with its oxygen and minute animal life is taken in to sustain the mollusk in its chiseled out residence. Through the siphon the eggs or young are discharged into the water outside. There the young mollusk soon develops a shell, and like his ancestors, starts to chisel out his own rock home.—*Pete Bogg.*

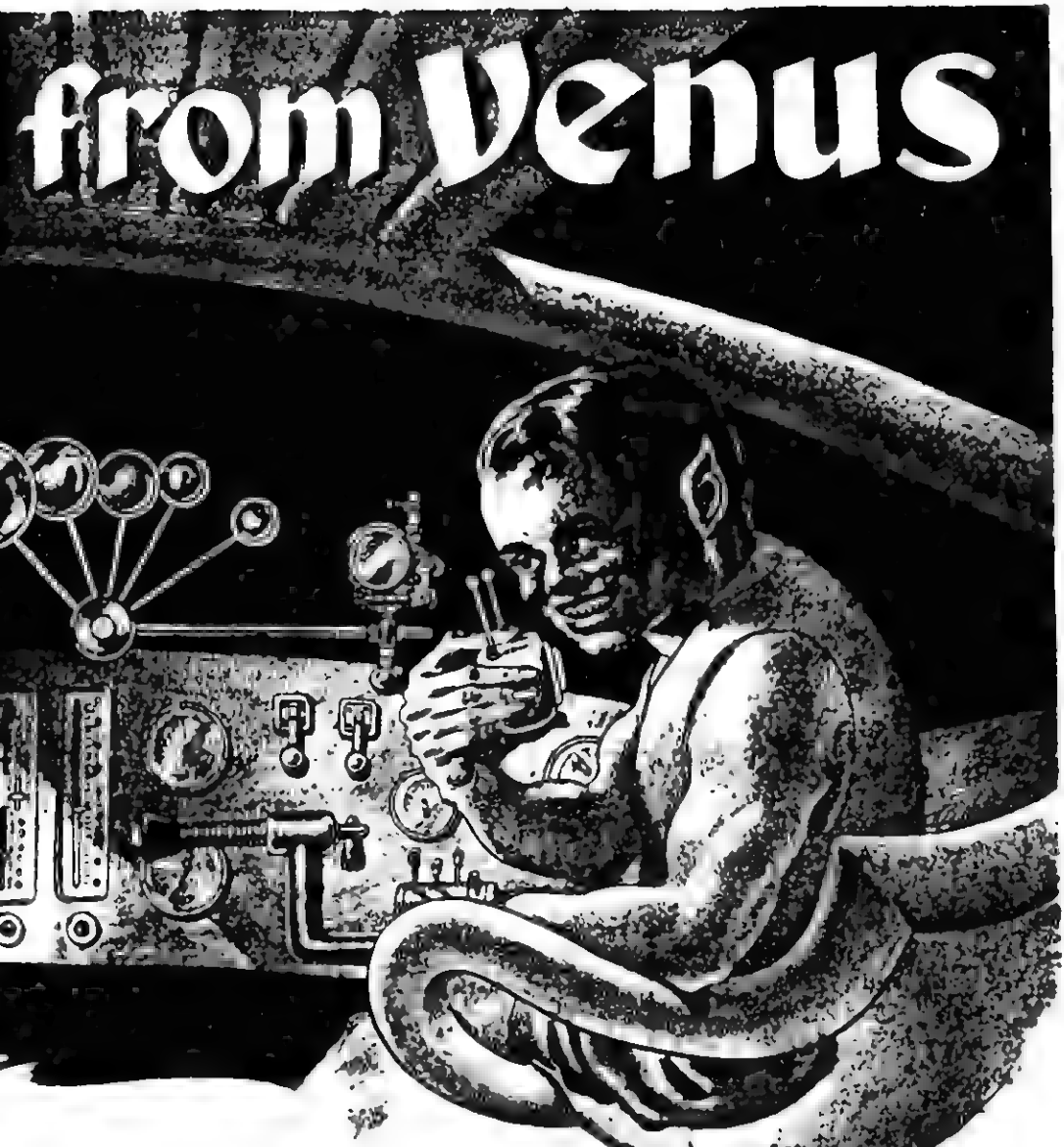
the Voice



By DON WILCOX

Say, for instance, that Venus DID send us an ambassador? How would our State Department accept him? Or would they? It's an intriguing situation . . .

from Venus



"He says this is unconstitutional, but I'm sure he'll change his mind!"

SO LONG, Earth folks. I'm rocketing for home. Back to my own planet, as fast as I can go. My mouth is watering for a real dinner from a yellow stone feasting table heaped high with a pyramid of Venus vegetables. And those juicy osserfeli steaks —unrationed; I can hardly wait.

I am now sailing through the blue, which is rapidly turning black. I'm sitting at the radio microphone. Lots of you Americans are listening, I'm sure.

Okay, hang on and I'll give you an earful.

Hang on, and you'll hear my voice more clearly right away, I promise you. Just now the accelerators are making a heavy hum. You probably thought it was static. Not so. It will fade out as soon as I hit my cruising speed.

Some of you listeners are pretty sore at me, I know. You are calling me names, no doubt. Telling your friends I'm a damned kidnapper.

Kidnapper—that's an ugly word. I wish I had never heard it. I wish I could have committed this act in complete innocence, without ever knowing that you Americans have federal and state laws—

All right I'm *guilty*—in your eyes. But please remember, I committed this act to keep my promise to the Streets of Venus. Try to remember that this kidnap victim is to be *your representative to the planet of Venus.*

Believe me, it was not easy to choose.

The full-lighted Earth is receding from me now—a globe of silver and white hung against the fathomless black velvet of space. It seems a long time since that breathless day when I first approached your Earth.

I well remember how your massive continents unfolded, showing dimly through the great swelling sphere of milky blue atmosphere. I kept saying to myself, "What kind of demons will I find down there? Ferocious beasts, no doubt."

I well remember that sea of luminous white clouds that widened beneath me in the last few minutes before I landed. Three or four purple mountaintops peeked through, and I wondered, were they dead stones—or were they the armored backs of mighty animals—or the menacing heads—or the periscope tails containing spying eyes? What strange terrors bore down upon my imagination in those final minutes of flight!

Then, through a break in the sea of clouds, I spied below the vast brown and gray mountain landscape. Solid land, heavy with stones and soil, alive with immense patches of blue and green forests.

The deep purple shadows invited me. They offered a hiding place for my ship. There, high in the crags, I first touched your Earth.

ONE hour later, after taking all possible precautions against all possibilities of death, I ventured to breathe my first breath of Earth air. You would never guess how it caused my head to whirl with its sweet aroma. I had to take it gradually. The smell of pines and mountain rocks, warm under the sunshine, was so tempting, so sickeningly delicious, that I wanted to breathe more and more.

You may think it strange, but I spent most of a week convincing myself that the air would not poison me.

On the sixth day I began to move about on the naked stones. At first I stayed within twenty or thirty feet of the door of my ship, with airlocks left open. You see, visions of monsters continually haunted me. I had not yet seen what manner of animal life dwelt here.

Soon I ventured farther, and when I saw rabbits and squirrels and deers, I wondered—were these the animal masters of this planet? But no, a new discovery set them aside. I came to the top of a ridge and saw, miles and miles below me, a *highway!*

The heart-thump of that moment comes back to me now. What a tiny little speck of movement—that first little black vehicle coasting along the narrow white trail around the mountain. Yet it told me volumes.

The speck disappeared. I stood trembling, terribly thrilled yet half afraid. There were creatures of intelligence on this planet. The deers hadn't built that roadway. The rabbits and squirrels hadn't propelled that black vehicle. Then who?

I made haste to hide my space ship on a shelf of rock. The shelf would be inaccessible, I was sure, to any but flying animals. However, for a further safeguard, I built screens of boughs to form a green blanket over the ship's surface.

I strung a ladder of flexible black fiber down the perpendicular wall of rock so that I could come and go. I memorized several landmarks in the valley below me and the outline of peaks around me until I was confident I would always be able to find my way back to this hiding place. Even if I ventured all the day down to that narrow curving ribbon of highway.

On the tenth day I came face to face with an Earth man.

The date of that meeting may someday go down in the school books. It was a historic hour, when you stop to consider. For at no previous time, so far as the records of Venus historians go, had modern Earth men and modern Venus men ever met.

I knew this; consequently it was a thrill to me—a much more wonderful and awful thrill than even the great Earth man, Columbus, must have felt when he first came face to face with the red man.

I knew. But the Earth man who faced me didn't know—and I couldn't tell him. He gazed at my strange dress. He saw in me a curiously helpless creature, breathing heavily, employing my arms as well as my legs in moving along the steep slope. For I was not yet accustomed to the rarified atmosphere, and my weight seemed to have increasd somewhat.

"Luuuuu," I greeted in my native tongue. Then I stood with one arm around the trunk of a tree, the other arm extended to show that I had no weapons. He came a few steps closer —long steps they were, for he was a very tall, rangy creature, not built on the sturdy, thick-set lines of Venusians.

He uttered a variety of interesting sounds from his lips, accompanied by a wobble of the bump in his pebble-brained throat. I could only understand that he was curious about me, as I was about him.

IT WAS immeasurably satisfying to find him a creature of one head on one body, with two legs and two arms, fingers somewhat similar to my own except that he had only five on each hand. He stared with his two steady blue eyes; and when I showed no signs of advancing or retreating he relaxed the lines of his face and revealed a line of little square teeth. I too spread my lips to show my teeth, widely spaced and sharp-pointed like bird's beaks. His smile vanished. Had I scared him?

I might have relieved the awkwardness of this meeting if I had led him to my hidden ship and shown him the chart of planets marked with my course. But I was not ready to do this, and so our exchange of unintelligible words and gestures ended and we each went our separate ways. He looked back, saw me running away. It wasn't *my* fear that made me run, but *his fear of me.*

On other days we both returned, and sometimes other men accompanied him, and each had his fill of gazing, whether with simple curiosity or fear or an attitude of hatred and suspicion. But this first man claimed me as his own discovery, and as time went on he came more often alone to the rocktop camp where

I was living, out of sight of my ship.

I would offer him some of the food which I had brought from Venus. And by his gestures I knew he was asking me where in these mountains I could have found such wonderful delicacies. But I was keeping my pledge to the Streets of Venus; my hidden ship must be my own secret. Confidence might come later, but my first task was to learn the language so I could understand the character of these people.

Soon the bright, new words were coming to life with meanings. It was a game that my new friend enjoyed, for as I later learned he was a schoolteacher.

"Orange," he said one day, and took from his pocket a bright-colored fruit. He held it up to my cheek. "Your face is orange."

My cheeks and broad forehead were indeed a fair match for the fruit, though my throat and pointed ears and six-fingered hands were a deeper bronze.

"Clothes," he said, touching my simple garments of gray fiber. Then he pointed to the spun metal parts of green and purple. "Collar . . . belt . . . cuffs

I repeated his words, and my effort to imitate his inflections delighted him. Sizes and shapes and colors came thick and fast. I was short, my shoulders were very broad, my head was extremely large, my voice was deep and full, my teeth were pointed: these facts were made clear to me.

In turn I tried to explain that my purple hair must all be combed from the right side straight over to the left because of *pluuvonng*—religion. But as yet we had no common basis for dealing with such abstractions.

"Where did you come from?" he would ask over and over. The glint in his eye denoted his growing amazement. That I should be so eager to learn and yet so innocent of any knowledge made me a tantalizing mystery.

HIS name was Frank Prentice. He took me back to his cabin one day and we sat on the porch overlooking the little mining settlement down the slope. Many miles below there stretched a blue valley like a level floor extending endlessly away from the mountains. When night came on, clusters of tiny lights could be seen.

Frank Prentice taught school a few hours each day. In the late afternoons he would tend his garden of vegetables and give feed to his chickens.

This, I thought, was what life was like on the Earth. It was a land where slender men lived in log houses and divided their time between teaching children and raising food. Perhaps I would take Frank Prentice back home to show Venus what the Earth was like.

I was given a place in Frank Prentice's log cabin. I ate by his low fire, I slept on one of the big furry skins on the floor, I helped him with the chickens and the garden. Whenever he took up a tool for work I would place my hand on it, and he would let me try the stroke to get it right. Hoeing and raking and spading were new to me and so very interesting.

"Let George do it," Prentice would say, smiling. Volunteering continually, I soon acquired the name of George. And thus I began to make a place for myself. My muscles hardened, my lungs adjusted to the light air, I grew accustomed to the hot blasts of sunshine unfiltered by clouds.

Prentice's life was simple. As compared to some of the others of his village he was somewhat slow of speech, inclined toward reading and thinking more than talking. He was something of a recluse from the society of the miners and their families, although he was always a patient listener when they came to talk out their troubles, and they valued his quiet judgments.

Only on dance nights would Frank Prentice cast off his reserved and philosophic nature. He would put away his pipe, don his best clothes, carefully trim the thin line of gray hairs on his upper lip. "The house is yours, George," he would say, striding off toward the shabby little town hall. On his return he would quickly retire to his books, his first love; yet it was plain that his spirit had been quickened by the evening's festivities.

A CAVE-IN occurred in one of the mines one morning, and the miners who weren't caught worked like fury to rescue the ones who were. I learned a lot about the Earth from that deal. I learned that the old whiskered parson, who preached all those terrifying sermons about the eternal hell that awaited such sinful liquor addicts as Jason Radmolder, was ready to grab a pick and shovel and work all night long to save Jason from suffering an unnecessary hour of hell in the mine.

I learned that the same rough and ready fighter named Bull Scroggins, who had threatened Jason Radmolder with a meat cleaver only a week before, was willing to sweat blood to keep that same Jason from suffocating in a clogged tunnel. And there were others like Bull and the parson. No matter how hard-boiled they may have talked about each other, you could see that they were really brothers in the face of hard luck.

I came out of that deal a sort of hero. It seems that my stocky muscles were unusually strong, and my endurance good. The minute Frank Prentice heard the alarm he yelled to me to gather up some digging tools, and away we went.

"Here's my hired man!" he yelled to the mine owner. "Just put him to work. He's good for your toughest job."

I raced along the sloping shaft in the wake of the lanterns. The mine owner pointed to the heap of rocks and dirt where the other men were prying at a broken beam. I was short enough to get my shoulder under that beam. A stream of dirt poured down my neck. The beam began to give.

"Hold it! Get that pole under, quick, men! Now—together. Look out for the rocks!" The mine owner shouted directions so fast I couldn't see all that happened. But the beam was coming up slowly, and I didn't mind a few splinters in my shoulder as long as it was going in the right direction. The men heaped rocks under that beam, then we grabbed the shovels and made the dirt fly.

Another beam to lift and to brace; more debris to clear; another beam, and another—

Hours may have been consumed in that furious action, but no one counted them. Every minute was so intense, charged with an Earth drama of life and death. Exery minute was a proof of the high regard of man for man—of owner for worker—of parson for sinner—of free men for trapped men.

And I wondered, through it all, if it was not also a historic event that proved the mutual respect between men of the Earth and men of Venus.

But no one knew. What would they have thought if they had known? I wondered.

The voice of the foreman sounded through the last barrier of loose earth and stones. He and the others were back there, alive, calling for us to hurry, crying for air.

"On this rock, George!" the mine owner shouted. "Help him here, men. Get a hitch on it, there. Heave, heave! Make it come . . . No, try it again. Together, now. *Look out!*"

The stone came like a stubborn tooth.

A shower of debris ripped down over my left arm. But the job was done. The gasps of "Thank God!" "Air! Air!" "Take it easy—hold everything—stay where you are till you get your breath!" and all the other confusing shouts from both sides of the barrier assured me that the crisis was over.

Then, they tell me, I fainted dead away from loss of blood. That left arm called for some hasty first aid. And after that they carried me out.

CHAPTER II

More Than Meets the Eye

"YOU'LL pull through all right," Frank Prentice was saying to me when I first came back to consciousness. "You're a pretty useful fellow, George. If you don't have anywhere else to go, you'd better spend the winter right here with me."

The doctor was working over me, putting some neat patches on my arm. I closed my eyes. Not because of the pain so much as the doctor's puzzled gaze. I was something new to him.

"I guess he's going back to sleep," Prentice said.

"The best thing for him," said the doctor. Then in a low voice that wasn't intended for my ears, "Where did you say he came from?"

"He just strayed in from nowhere. I first saw him up above Magnolia Gulch. He seemed to be living there in a camp all alone. He couldn't talk. He had trouble explaining anything to me, even through the simplest signs. For example, it didn't mean anything to him, at first, when I beckoned to him. Or when I offered my hand."

"He's definitely abnormal," the doctor said. "Physically he's unlike any other human freak I ever saw."

Some of these words were only meaningless sounds to my ears, but I tucked them away in my growing storehouse of sounds, determined to find out in time what they meant.

Prentice told the doctor all about the strange foods which I had offered him in our first meetings. This disturbed the doctor more than ever. How could I have found my way into these mountains, bearing fruits from some foreign land—fruits that were still fresh?

"All I know," said Prentice, "is that he is an excellent worker. He's quick to learn. If he did come from some foreign land, at least he doesn't show any intention of going back."

"You'd better get rid of him," said the doctor.

"Why?"

"He's probably dangerous. He may have come here for a purpose. He may not be as simple minded as you think."

"You heard how he rescued those trapped miners, doctor," said Prentice.

"Next," said the doctor, "I'll expect to hear how he murdered a schoolteacher named Prentice in the dead of night—"

"S-s-s-sh." Prentice didn't like such talk. He explained his own theory about me. He didn't think I was an abnormal specimen, mentally speaking. A f o r e i g n e r — undoubtedly. The chances were that I had been dropped from some passing plane. Planes *were* falling into the hands of lots of far-off tribes these days. Wasn't it conceivable that the Hottentots or some primitive society had decided to explore other parts of the Earth, and had dropped off one of their delegates here in the Rocky Mountains?"

"He doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to a Hottentot," said the doctor. "He doesn't resemble anything. I've got a book at home with all the races of the world pictured in it. He isn't there."

"Bring your book over some time, doctor," said Prentice, unruffled but thoroughly stubborn. "If George isn't in it, you'd better add a new chapter to your book. Take his picture, listen to his language—"

"What language?"

"Oh, he has one, all right, all his own."

The doctor came down to me and ruffled my head of purple hair. "How you feeling, George? Want to wake up?"

I OPENED my eyes. I reached for a comb and straightened the lines of my hair from right to left. To ruffle my hair is to offend and insult the sacred and solemn part of my nature.

"He's sensitive about his hair," Prentice said. "I wouldn't do that—"

The doctor repeated his gesture of ruffling me. He did it, laughing. And I slapped him. Hard across his cheek I struck with my good right hand. Without thinking—*slap!*—what an awful thing to do!

The blow jolted him. The face wasn't pleasant to look at, drawn in pained surprise and anger. Instantly I was sorry. But the right words to tell him so just weren't ready. Instead of words, I shook my head, as if to say, "No, no, I didn't mean it." Then I slapped myself quick and hard, three times, still shaking my head.

Anger faded from the doctor's eyes and he stared at me, fascinated.

"There's more here than meets the eye, Prentice," he said quietly. "This man may be mad, but I'm not so sure. If he had the means to communicate his thoughts to us—"

I understood this, and I began nodding my head. "Yes, yes," I said. "When I can talk more, then I tell you more—when you — when you listen more."

The doctor rubbed his cheek and managed to smile a little. He asked me a question cautiously, picking up the comb as he spoke. "George, may I comb your hair—the same way you combed it?"

"Yes, please," I said.

He did it, and I smiled and nodded. "That is right," I said.

"*Why? Why* must the hair be combed that way?"

"Because—*pluuvonng!*"

"Pluuvonng? He glanced at my fingers, my stocky shoulders, and again at my purple hair. "Pluuvonng? I never heard of it."

He had me repeat the word several times, and he jotted some letters down in a notebook. He turned to Prentice. "Well, this beats me. I'm going right into the university and scan all the latest literature on ethnology. You've got something here, but I'm damned if I know what it is. As you say, he's very undertsanding and cooperative. It seems as if he's just coming into the first light of knowledge, without any sort of background to make things easier. But he's learning fast."

"You've changed your mind, then," Prentice said in an undertone, "about his being dangerous?"

"Well, I wouldn't rub his hair the wrong way," said the doctor.

CHAPTER III

Scientists Baffled

I WAS always eager for Frank Prentice to explain the meanings of pictures and printed matter that came to him in the mail. It was marvelous how much he gathered from daily newspapers about happenings all over the Earth.

Little by little the social and political systems of this new world began to take shape in my mind. Such words as

president and *congress* and *prime minister* and *dictator* began to take on the weighted meanings for me that they conveyed to everyone else.

A newspaper photograph of two very dignified looking gentlemen shaking hands in front of a huge white-columned building took my eye.

"Who are they?" I asked.

"This one is the Secretary of State," said Prentice. "He is extending an official welcome to a new ambassador from a foreign country. You see, when the Secretary of State welcomes an ambassador, that is the official welcome from all of America."

"You are part of America," I said. "And so is the mine owner. And the parson, and the doctor, and Jason Radmolder and Bull Scroggins—"

"And a hundred and thirty or forty million more," said Prentice. "That's the point. We can't all have the privilege of shaking hands with a new ambassador, so we elect a president, and he appoints the proper men to handle such jobs. He appointed this Secretary of State to represent Americans in this capacity, you see. Or do you?"

"He is the one to say hello to men from other lands," I said.

"That's it in a nutshell."

"I would like to say hello to the Secretary of State," I said.

Frank Prentice smiled. "You're an innocent sort of fellow, aren't you. No, don't ask me what I mean by innocent. We've had enough questions for today. Just take my word for it, getting an interview with the Secretary of State is pretty complicated."

I waited until Prentice had finished his paper before I pursued the topic. Then—

"What sort of man is the Secretary of State? Is he kind, like you? Or noisy, like Bull Scroggins? Or a drunk, like Jason Radmolder? Or smart, like the doctor?"

"He's as smart as a whip," said Prentice. "Politics may come and go, but you'll find right down through our American history that the secretaries of state are always men of high intelligence and good judgment. It's true that not everyone in America will always agree with them in their opinions. But people sometimes forget that a Secretary of State has to spread his good will among a lot of countries."

"If some new country appears, will he have any good will left for it?"

"That's a strange question," said Prentice. "Before any new country pops into existence, it's the Secretary of State's business to know what's popping."

That clinched it for me. I didn't tell Prentice so, but I knew from that moment on that the Secretary of State was the man I should see. He would want to know that Venus was popping out toward her sister planet, and that I was the first pop.

But the more I learned and observed, the more I was convinced that Prentice was right, it wouldn't be easy. Unless I were well prepared in my new ability to use Earth words, I might fail in my very first courtesies, and then America would not like Venus.

IF I didn't confide my secret plans to Prentice it was because I felt that he didn't quite understand me. He was sympathetic in his way, and I needed every ounce of that sympathy in this tough job of getting my bearings.

But it was my misfortune to have a physical appearance very different from his own. However handsome I might be considered back in Venus, I was to him a grotesque figure with orange cheeks and pointed ears, stocky stature, purple hair, and six-fingered hands. These characteristics colored his opin-

ion of me much more than he realized.

He began to think of me as a creature of some mysterious misfortune. All the doctor's speculations about my belonging to some African or East Indies race didn't eradicate Prentice's stubborn conviction. Sometimes I would overhear him stating his beliefs to allay the curiosity of a friend.

"He must have had a streak of genius in him, the way he's learning. But I tell you, he started from scratch the day I found him. We'll probably never know what hard luck retarded him. And of course you never know—he might forget everything all at once some day. But I'm betting on him."

This bet was sometimes a bit amusing to me. It would have amazed many of the most important citizens back in Venus to know that I, the man they had honored with the chance to make this historic visit, should be made the beneficiary of an experiment in social salvaging.

But no better fortune could have befallen me than to have a patient and generous teacher like Prentice gamble his hours on the hope that I would eventually make good.

I was much more disturbed over my relations with the doctor. My suspicions grew that he was gathering up trouble for me, even though his intentions might be good.

The next time he returned to bandage my arm, he brought a girl and two strange men along. The girl I had seen before. She was his assistant, not with medicine but with pencils and a notebook.

The doctor asked me many questions. The girl seemed to be writing down the whole conversation. It made me very cautious about saying anything, especially if I was not sure of my words. My growing reticence made the doctor's eyes narrow.

"We'll have to discount part of what he says," the doctor instructed. "You can see he has a very primitive mind. Notice how distorted his ideas of distance are." The doctor turned to me. "Now, George, you have told us that you came from a long, long way off. Do you see that little village down in the valley?"

"I see it," I replied.

"Did you come from that far?"

"Many times farther."

"A hundred times as far?" asked the doctor. "Or a thousand times as far?"

"Easily a million," I said.

The doctor and his secretary exchanged amused smiles, and let it go at that.

Meanwhile, the two strange men set up little dark boxes on tripods and surprised me with some flashes of light. At this time I didn't know about photographs.

NOT long after this day, however, I was startled to see my own picture in a section of the Sunday newspaper. Many of the people in the mining village called that day or the next to ask Prentice if he had seen it.

There I was, all decked out in bright colors. The picture showed me naked to the waist, just as I had been when the doctor last examined me. The orange of my face was well marked. The bronze of my throat and chest and arms shone like metal. My sharp pointed teeth had been colored yellow to make them more conspicuous. My purple hair was in its brightest glory.

"Why am I in the paper?" I said, as soon as I could capture my breath from the shock.

"Lots of people will be interested," said Prentice.

"Will the Secretary of State see me?" I said.

"Ha," said Prentice dryly. "I doubt if he has time to read the Sunday supplements."

"What do the words say?" I had the uncomfortable feeling, in watching the expressions of the villagers who came by to discuss the matter, that that newspaper article didn't do me any great honor. "Go ahead and read the words to me, Frank."

"You wouldn't like them," he said. "I don't like them. I doubt if the doctor himself will feel so hot about this job. They've exaggerated his statements."

"What does it say about me?"

"It says that you're a human puzzle that baffles the scientists. They don't know what you are. They think you should be in some institution for observation."

"If I were in an institution," I said, "would I get to see the Secretary of State?"

"Not in the sort of institution they're talking about. It would be more like a prison, I'm afraid. They raise a lot of questions about you. Some scientists doubt whether any theories of mutations or sports could possibly account for you."

"I am afraid I don't understand your words."

"They used the term freak. A rather ugly word, George. You mustn't let it hurt you. But that isn't all. Someone has offered the opinion that you couldn't have just *happened*. That you must be the result of a scientific *hoax*. Someone must have altered the character of the hormones responsible for your nature, perhaps through the use of some experimental rays."

"What does it all mean, Frank? I don't quite understand."

"There's danger that you may be taken into a laboratory for more physical examinations. All of those anthropometric measurements that the doctor took, together with X-rays and photographs, may arouse considerable excitement in the world of science. Are you interested in going through with it?"

"I am interested," I said, "in going to the capitol at Washington. I would like to see where President Truman and all the Congressmen live. I would like to have my picture taken shaking hands with Secretary of State Stettinius in front of the White House."

The following Thursday, while Frank was at school, I saw two cars climbing the mountain road toward the village. They came up to Prentice's cabin and stopped.

Several men got out and came toward the door. One of them was the doctor. Others may have been doctors, and others newspaper men. Still others were wearing the light blue uniforms of state policemen.

They knocked and waited.

I walked quietly out the back door. I heard them coming around the side of the cabin. I didn't feel that it would be a dignified thing for the first representative from Venus to the Earth to *run*. Was it not even less dignified, however, for him to be picked up by policemen and taken to a laboratory? I *walked* past three clumps of evergreen, past the chicken house, up through a narrow pass between huge boulders, into the thick forest of pines on the upward slope.

By that time I was ready to respond to the exhilarating mountain air. I wasn't interested in strange voices that were calling my name from down at the cabin. I felt like exercising. So I ran.

And I kept up a good pace until I touched my six-fingered hands to the black fiber ladder that led up to my ship.

CHAPTER IV

The Wonder Book

FLYING low in the darkness, I looked in vain for familiar sights. Back in Venus I would have looked for the lights of a continuous street zigzagging across the whole width of the continent. The continent-long Streets of Venus were the back-bone of the social and commercial life in my world.

But this was the world of Frank Prentice. I had already learned much through conversation and pictures. Now before me was the task of putting together my new store of knowledge with physical and ecological landscapes that met my eye.

The Earth's settlements, I was continually reminded, had occurred in clusters dotted all over the land. These were the cities and towns of which Prentice had spoken. Magically lighted by night, they were equally interesting when they daylight came on. The larger cities were continually alive with motor traffic. Such an exhibition of energy being expended hour after hour would have amazed any native Venusian. For in my world there is far less of the mad rush. At certain periods of each day vehicles and factory machines and the most diligent of workers all come to a stop for rest and enjoyment.

Before the fall weather ended, I made several excursions away from the mountain range to broaden my acquaintance with the life of Frank Prentice's one hundred and thirty million brothers and sisters. Looking down on them from a safe distance, I wondered how many thousands of them were like him in their natures. Did they enjoy working in schools, mines, shops? Did they enjoy tending chickens, making garden, reading books, attending dances?

The police ceased to come to Prentice's cabin after failing several times to find me at home. The doctors forgot me. I was left to my own devices.

Without ever telling Prentice about my mysterious absences, I gradually extended my excursions to include other continents. A few times I ran the risk of brief, perilous trips over the zones of war. Sometimes I would be spotted by searchlights or observed by patrol planes, and I would have to touch the throttle and race away to avoid an awkward situation. My heart pounded with longing to see more of these foreign places, but I contented myself that explorations would come as soon as I mastered more of the languages and customs.

A BEAUTIFUL, terrible winter descended, the first I ever saw. It was well that I had taken such pains to cover my hidden ship. Now I understood the functions of log houses and sturdy Earth buildings as never before. The iron rail around Prentice's wood stove was pleasant warmth against our feet and the blankets we put over the backs of our chairs protected our rears from the chill drafts. Into the night we read books. He would read slowly; I would watch the words and pictures.

The most wonderful of all books was the mail order catalog. The whole magic world of Earth man and his tools, games, ornaments, and the myriad treasures of his home began to unfold before me. Whenever my work was done I would turn to it.

"This must be the greatest of all the world's books," I said to Frank Prentice.

He smiled. "If it's amnesia, yours is a record case. You must have had catalogs where you came from. But it's plain you've forgotten even that."

"How could I *earn* a catalog?"

"What for?"

"To take with me."

"I didn't know you were going anywhere."

"If I would work in the mines could I earn a catalog?"

Frank Prentice got up and refilled his pipe and stood by the shelf looking at me. Gradually the lines of curiosity around his eyes relaxed into a patient smile, which was his way when he ran into things inexplicable. I thought I would tell him, then; but he moved the light over to his desk and busied himself with some writing. A few days later a new catalog came by mail, and he assured me it was mine, and free. And so together we read the winter away, and I filled with the wonders of Earth man's life.

CHAPTER V

I Break It Gently

SUMMER brought two young visitors to this mountain cabin. John Vonada, Prentice's nephew, was a brisk young lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. His girl friend, Pauline Neff, was a lovely, clear-eyed creature with musical laughter and a faith and a devotion toward John that was interesting to see. This relationship impressed me greater with the passings days, though at first it was the more superficial things that fascinated me: his prince-like uniform, her red nails that matched her red lips, the air of youth and vitality that they brought to Prentice's lodge. My own appearance, I discovered anew, was more than a little shocking. An hour after these two arrived in their bright yellow automobile, they went into a prolonged aside with Prentice, and they cast many glances in my direction as I went on with the gardening. Prentice must have give them a good report. The three of them came out to see me, and we talked in the friendliest of terms about how the beans flourished and how well the hens laid at this time of year.

Later in the week John told us all about his air training and he asked very casually, "Do you care for aviation, George, or have you ever been up in a plane?"

My response was somewhat evasive. "Up? Why do you say up? If you are on the other side of the planet is it up or down when you leave the surface?"

They laughed, and John said, "Which way would your beans grow on the other side of the planet, up or down?"

"Both ways," Pauline said, beating me to the punch. "We'll leave the aviation to you, John. The rest of us don't know beans about it, do we?"

My clothes became a matter for some concern on Pauline's part during her stay. She did some mending for me and altered some of Prentice's worn garments, and she and John drove me down to a small city at the foot of the mountains and had some fine new clothing tailored for me. This all called for considerable expenditure, and so, for the first time, I brought forth two small bars of platinum and offered them as pay.

This offer resulted in another private conference with Frank Prentice, for Pauline and John were much too amazed to accept.

The three of them came to me. Prentice said, "George, we're not going to ask where you got these precious metals. But are you quite sure you want to give them away? They're worth dozens of wardrobes, you know."

"Mine to give," I said, "and I have one for you, too."

It was a pleasure to exchange favors, and an experience to leave a lasting im-

pression: that Earth people like Pauline and John and Frank Prentice were unwilling to reach for an unfair advantage. The appreciative faces were to remain in the gallery of my mind as symbols of the warmth between the Earth and Venus, the beginnings of a future commerce that I hoped would always be friendly.

IN MY new clothes I bore much more resemblance to an Earth man than I had supposed possible, although the exaggerated width of my shoulders, the largeness of my head, and my colorful complexion would always mark me as conspicuous in any crowd. As Pauline put it, I looked much more like the gentleman I was meant to be—but there was still room for improvement.

"I think you're making him uncomfortable," John said. "You should see how we look after a hard day's flying. We're a sight."

"But his hair is all wrong, John. Help me," Pauline said.

They approached me with scissors and combs and an apron to put around my neck, and announced I was in for a tonsorial operation.

To shake my head for *no* was one of the first gestures I had learned, and I put it to good use now. My hair dress must not be changed.

"Why not, George?" Pauline protested. "It will be much more comfortable. All that mop on your left side looks so—so primitive. What is it, a superstition or something?"

"It's *pluuvonng*," I said.

"Pluuvonng?" Pauline and John looked at each other questioningly. They say that Prentice was taking on his puzzled smile.

"His vocabulary is jumping too fast for me," Prentice said. "I'll have to look that one up."

Of course the dictionary offered no help; it was up to me to explain myself or lose my hair.

"Pluuvonng is religion. My beliefs command me to wear my hair this way. So if you please—"

I thought this appeal had won my point, for Prentice gently took the scissors from Pauline's hands. He suggested that we all go for a walk along the mountain paths.

As the four of us sauntered along through the pines Frank Prentice began to talk philosophically about the glorious colors of the evening clouds. "God's world is full of wonders," he said. "Each of us is free to choose his own way of appreciating what the Creator has given us. And yet—"

He paused, placed a hand on my shoulder, and gestured toward the broad, beautiful land beyond the foothills.

"And yet through the centuries we've come to agree pretty well, millions of us, upon the best forms for our religious expressions. It's rather silly, isn't it, for one person to insist on some pet ostentation just to be distinctive?"

"Suppose there are *millions* with my hair dress. Would I be justified?"

"Fifty million can't be wrong!" This amused crack came from the young lieutenant. Half facetiously he turned to Pauline. Her father, it seemed, was a professor of social studies at a university. "This is one for your dad, Pauline. Does he know there are millions of people with religion in their hair?"

It had been my intention to break the news as gently as possible, and now the time had come. I reached up to place a six-fingered hand on Frank Prentice's shoulder. I gestured toward the land below us, then toward the darkening sky.

"I mean no offense against the good people of the land," I said. "But somewhere there are other worlds. I am only

a visitor to your Earth. When we first met I lacked the words to tell you this. Where I came from there are millions of people like me. Our *pluuvonng* demands that we comb our hair this way."

"Do you mean to say," said Prentice, drilling me with a cold, skeptical stare, "that you think you came from somewhere beyond the Earth?"

I nodded. "I came from the planet you call Venus."

CHAPTER VI

A Friend Turns Cool

IF THE great mountains had silently broken from their bases and floated into the sky there could have been no more vivid evidence of amazement in the faces of my three good friends. Pauline was first to speak.

"That explains a lot of things," she said slowly. "It's—it's almost incredible . . . and yet . . . yes, it explains—"

"How did you get here?" John came toward me with glittering eyes. "You must have flown! How many came with you?"

"I came alone. It was an experimental flight."

"Where is your ship? Why hasn't the world heard of this?"

"I was pledged to hide my ship on arriving. It's within a few miles. I'm sorry I can't take you to it. Tomorrow I'll show you a picture."

The young lieutenant was on fire with enthusiasm. "So you know all about this aviation business. More than any of us know!"

He and Pauline bombarded me with questions. Frank Prentice looked on uncomfortably, and I felt that his hospitality was becoming strangely cool.

As a skilled aviator with his eyes on the future flying, Lieutenant John Vonada was like a blotter for absorbing all the information I could divulge. Our talk continued through the supper hour. Needless to say, Pauline had forgot all about the haircut; her interest was in the history, language, and family customs and artifacts of my people.

"I can hardly wait, she said, "until father hears of you. Hell have to know everything. You do have proofs, don't you? See, his studies are right along this line: races and nationalities and the clashes of culture. I'm afraid you'll find yourself Exhibit A in the first interplanetary laboratory, or something, when the universities get their hands on you."

"I'm here to represent Venus as well as I can," I said. "I'm sure I've had the Earth's finest teacher to prepare me."

"Take a bow, Uncle Frank," John said. "You'll go down in history."

Frank Prentice didn't turn. He was standing by the open window puffing smoke out into the darkness. During all this excitement I had missed his easy smile. Had something been said to hurt him? Could he be disappointed that I was not an unfortunate, an amnesia victim, a vagrant?

Pauline took his arm and bade us all come to the porch where we could look at the stars while we talked.

TO ME, that long night of conversation will always serve as a landmark, the beginning of something which may never end, a sharing of understandings between Venus and the Earth. It was a communion for which these two alert youth were ready.

Frank Prentice, however, chose to remain silent. I knew, then, that I had stung him by keeping my secret all these months. He was a reasonable man, generous, honest, and very proud. Until now he was the only person I had thought of taking back to Venus with

me. I wondered.

On the following day I showed my picture of the ship with officials from the Streets of Venus standing in front of it wishing me a successful voyage. Pauline and John were of course more eager than ever for a glimpse of the ship itself, but were able to take my refusal gracefully.

Prentice's only comment concerned the unusual qualities of the photograph.

"If it came from Venus," he said, "your people must be well advanced in the arts."

"They are, indeed. Our elements are, of course, the same as your own, and it seems that we have found our way into many similar and even identical processes—"

"If it came from Venus," Prentice repeated with a disturbing emphasis on the *if*. "Excuse me, please. I'll go to the garden . . . No, you needn't come . . ."

Thus the distance between my first Earth friend and me promised to grow. I was learning a lesson I would not forget: that good and reasonable Earth men can be grieved by subtle matters to which they are unwilling or unable to give voice. Complicated creatures they are.

It was time for Prentice's nephew to leave for the war. Our farewell was full of high hopes. What would the postwar future bring? With good luck he would perhaps fly his own ship to Venus before another decade.

Before he and Pauline drove away she whispered to me, "How about that haircut, George?"

I shook my head. *"Pluuvonng."*

"What I really want to say, George, is that you mustn't mind our Uncle Frank. He'll get over the shock in time. But you see, his world of knowledge has a solid fence around it and you've walked right through it. He sees himself as a teacher—"

"He's a splendid one," I said.

"Yes. Your own swift learning has proved that. The point is, he can't readily change to the role of pupil . . . I hope you won't walk out on him too soon, George. He's terribly fond of you."

"Thank you, Pauline."

"That's all, George." She gave me a friendly pat on the shoulder. "You'll be hearing from my father at the university. Good-bye."

CHAPTER VII

Wool Over the Eyes

A YEAR later my months of study in in the seclusion of the mountains seemed as remote as the stars.

The passing year had brought tremendous changes in the course of my visit. I was now out in the wide, busy, noisy Earth world, meeting its people.

Every new day brought me a new audience of two or three hundred persons, and on the big days my crowds numbered in the thousands. This was the fulfillment of my mission. It was, if I have succeeded in my grasp of things important, the process by which Venus must acquaint itself with the Earth, and vice versa.

The institution which brought me my daily audience was called a carnival. It roved from city to city by motor truck.

My manager was a very enterprising and presuasive man known as Windy McKean. He had a voice whose quality could not be matched by the least musical voice in Venus. He was a square faced man who used one side of his mouth for shouting and the other for smoking his cigar. The title given to his profession is carnival barker.

My new life as a part of the carnival was very strenuous; there was no end

of noise, much inconvenience of moving from place to place, a complete lack of the pleasant contemplative atmosphere and the privacy I had enjoyed at Frank Prentice's mountain home.

But if I sometimes winced from the disagreeable, Windy McKean was always there to give me a walloping slap on the back and reassure me that this was what a fellow had to go through to put himself over on the public.

"I'll run 'em in, George," he would say with a flourish of his red megaphone. "You lecture 'em to your heart's content. Together we'll pull a lot of wool over a lot of eyes."

That phrase about wool over the eyes mystified me at times. An old carnival man told me that Windy McKean was pulling the wool over my eyes. When I asked Windy what this meant he said it was just an expression. "Plenty of wool is what you need, George. It's what everyone needs so they can unlax and take it easy when the razzle-dazzle gets too thick."

I understood, as time went on, that Windy was being generous toward me with this soothing wool treatment. He was good at explaining troubles and doubts away and making everything crystal clear.

I MIGHT have doubted whether my fenced-off pen inside this big flapping yellow tent was the ideal working arrangement for the accomplishment of my mission. But Windy McKean was quick with the answers. Did I want to see the people of the Earth? The carnival was the place. Sooner or later everybody came to the carnival. Did I want to gain some insights on the Earth's governments? All the great governments were democracies. That meant they were made up of all the people. Where could all the people be found at their brightest and best? At the carnival. The Earth's liveliest music, its art, its physical prowess, its curiosities and wonders? They were all here in abundance.

So, thanks to Windy McKean, I stuck to my pen with its brown canvas fence inside the big yellow tent with the gaudy paintings on the front.

Those paintings, by the way, were an unforgettable sample of the art that fascinates the eyes of Earth people. Personally I was disappointed because they were grossly inaccurate. The artist, whether for humor or some esoteric motive, had given my body a width three times as great as my height, a skin color of brilliant red, muscles like gnarled tree trunks, and teeth with hooks like eagles' beaks. The painting of the space ship bore no resemblance to my craft whatsoever. And that weird sky scene showed Venus hung between the horns of a crescent moon. But whatever the inaccuracies, this work of art had a compelling effect upon the crowds.

I stuck, and it was a great satisfaction to me to see that many people were impressed by what I had to say.

Occasionally I would receive a letter from Pauline with news of her flying lieutenant and some mention of Professor Neff's interest in me.

Frank Prentice also sometimes wrote. Once he inquired at some length as to whether I was satisfied with my adventures with the great American public, whether I found time to continue my studies, and especially whether my attitudes toward the deeper values of Earth life were changing. On sixteen neatly penned pages he reechoed our many discussions of that second long winter following my Venusian revelation.

Although he did not ask explicitly whether I had ever cut my hair, I could see he still hoped his missionary efforts

had proved effective. For the strain of our friendship in those last months together had come to a focus most often upon our differences in faith. Prentice, ever the teacher, was determined that what he could give me in beliefs and creeds would prove still more valuable than my richest acquisitions from the mail order catalog. For him, my first and most faithful Earth friend, I would have done almost anything; but as a Venusian I couldn't give up my hair.

Our tour took us westward across America and eventually we came to the city of Pauline Neff's university. My heart quickened as I read her brief note: "Put on your best bib and tucker, George. I'm coming tonight and I'll try to bring father . . ."

As she entered the tent with the crowd, her eyes shining straight at me, I thought she was the loveliest Earth creature of all my many audiences. And I knew she was the most understanding. She made a funny gesture of surprise at the native garments I wore, complete with green and purple metallic decorations.

"I tried to bring father," she whispered as the swarm of onlookers crowded her along the fence. "He may come later."

"And your lieutenant?"

"Overseas, fighting hard. I'll visit with you after the show."

MY LECTURE of that night topped anything I had ever done. Back on Venus I had grown up in the tradition of professional speaking, and had followed it to the neglect of most of my sportive avocations, wrestling excepted. Now my command of the new Earth language, the idioms and inflections and gestures, had matured so that the audience followed me with perfect ease. I could see Pauline applauding me with her eyes.

I traced my course to the Earth on a chart of the inner planets. I demonstrated the workings of my ship from a diagram. I answered questions.

For the first time I told a few of the exciting experiences that befell me when I first broke away from mountain solitude and adventured into the cities unheralded. Then I contrasted the cities of the Earth with the continent-wide Streets of Venus, compared our mode of transportation, pointed out similarities in our use of electric power and chemicals and natural resources.

The crowd went away happy, and Windy McKean bounced in to give me a wallop on the back. Even the skeptics, he said, were half convinced, and if I could keep up the good work—

He broke off, widening his eyes at Pauline. He removed his cigar and shoved his hat back and looked pleased as I offered introductions.

"Say, maybe you're the reason George spread himself," Windy grinned. "Maybe we oughta give you a season ticket."

Pauline smiled. Then, "Mr. McKean, I hoped my father would come. You didn't see a very straight, dignified man with thick spectacles?"

"Yeah. He took a look at the outside and got scared out."

"Oh . . ."

"Or maybe he'll come in for the next performance after the big tent show lets out."

"I'll wait," Pauline said.

I thought I had told everything, but as soon as we got down to visiting over hamburgers and pop I found I'd just begun. Then I took my turn at asking questions, and after she'd finished with the news of John Vonada and Frank Prentice she turned some new spotlights on me by getting out some clippings. There were two or three Sunday supplement articles, differing widely in

their revelations about my hidden nature and secret motives and obscure origin, but containing in common some tantalizing questions such as, suppose this freak of nature actually did come from Venus . . . and after all, who knows?

There was a crisp paragraph from a weekly news magazine's column of miscellany that described me as a "bronzed, broad-shouldered mountain hermit" whose "delusions of Venusian origin" hadn't prevented my becoming the town's most faithful chicken feeder.

Finally there was an editorial from a big daily newspaper demanding that carnivals should be investigated for propaganda activities, since rumor had it that "so-called men of Venus" were making speeches to undermine American institutions.

On the surface this was all very amusing, and yet I could see that Pauline was disturbed.

"These aren't good publicity," she said. "They make conservative people dubious. Take father, for example, and his fellow professors in the university. They have to be so careful."

"I don't understand. Is Windy right? Was your father afraid to come in and see me?"

Pauline crumpled the paper sandwich plate and twisted it in her tinted fingers. "George, I don't suppose you've heard how people laughed at a Martian invasion panic a few years ago. But you can understand that any professor who sticks his neck out to believe something new may get his throat cut."

"Lose his job for seeking new knowledge?"

"It may sound absurd to you, but professors learn to stay with their books and statistics and play safe. Any university board learns to be terribly careful how it spends the taxpayers' money. So . . ."

"So your father may not come?" I tried to conceal my disappointment. It wasn't easy. In my mind I had built the strong hope that Professor Neff, whose job was to be interested in the ways of all different peoples, would be as eager for Venus news as even Windy McKean.

Pauline and I left the tent by the side entrance, and there, by the line of parked cars, a few yards away, a very straight and dignified middle-aged gentleman was pacing in agitation.

"It's my father," Pauline said. She called, and we met him under the light at the edge of the parking lot.

CHAPTER VIII

Windy Has Ideas

I'M UNCERTAIN whether he ever actually saw me. He seemed rather to be looking through me, staring at something distant which could only be seen through my shoulders; and all the while his words were directed at Pauline.

"This escapade was a mistake, Pauline." His voice was low and rather more kindly than his expressionless face. "I trust the faculty won't hear of it."

"Father, this is George that I've told you so much about. He's come to us all the way from Venus. Please talk with him."

"Come, Pauline. This is no time or place for professional conferences."

"You can at least make an appointment," she pleaded.

I added my voice to this suggestion. "I would appreciate that very much, Professor Neff."

For a moment he hesitated, and I thought his eyes were going to find a focus on me. Perhaps my voice had only startled him. He took Pauline by

the hand. "They've just given me another committee, dear. I can't take on any more responsibilities."

There were tears in Pauline's eyes as she looked back. "Father isn't usually this way . . . I'm sorry . . . Please don't give up hope."

A few days later she repeated these sentiments through a brief letter. I had come at an especially difficult time. In another year things would be different. I must set my hopes high. The learned men of the country might be slow to recognize me but in time they would elevate me to my rightful place.

At this I smiled the smile I had learned from Frank Prentice, an answer to things I was not capable of understanding.

Through the late fall and winter we toured southward. In this past year I'm afraid my performance never again attained the high spirit of that night of Pauline's visit. There were always skeptics aplenty, and now I turned a more attentive ear to their cruel comments.

"Fake." "What they can't think of to get your quarters." "Next year they'll say he's from Mars." "If he came from Venus I came from the moon." "My cousin said he used to be the auctioneer down on the river. He's painted his face and put on some false hands." "I wish they'd pay me to give that speech," "Bunkum . . . Hogwash."

What made these remarks endurable were the few eager and curious listeners who would stay to ask questions—small boys, clear thinking adolescents, and occasionally a shabby elderly man with courage and youth in his eye. The youngsters had a strange phobia about invasions and conquests; if I really came from Venus why didn't I get busy with my ray guns and start blasting the population off the Earth? To this I could only answer that the Earth's own war populations were already committing destruction beyond any Venusian's wildest dream. I had come simply to establish an acquaintance between Venus and the Earth. Yes, I planned to go back. When? Well, my hidden ship was ready whenever I felt that my mission had been fulfilled.

"The whole damned carnival needs a new coat of paint," Windy McKean said to me one day. "You're a hellova good show, George, but you and I can't carry more than two ends of this outfit."

TOWARD spring we expected business to improve but it didn't. War requirements had cut deep, we were short-handed, our muscles worked overtime between performances. Windy was as worried as the big boss himself. The big tent show was limping, and some of the sideshows had become dead weight.

"We've got to pep up the act, George. I wish to gosh you did have a space flivver like the one in your picture. That would pull 'em in."

"I do have, but I'm not to display it."

"Yeah, yeah. Same words, same tune. We won't argue that all over." He chewed his cigar thoughtfully and sifted confetti through his hands. "We gotta think of something. If you could work up a song and dance and say it came from Venus—"

I assured him that I had chosen neither singing nor dancing for an avocation on Venus. My mission here would be fulfilled only through speaking.

He gave a sullen growl. "Hell, man, don't you ever take your mask off? How can you stay so damned serious? You're among friends. You don't have to pull no wool over my eyes."

"I'd be glad to," I said, "if the razzle-

dazzle of Venus gets too thick for you." before. I know how we'll pep up the

"Skip it. Go ahead with your act. I'll never give you away. I'm not a guy to talk, even when I'm drunk . . . Hmmm." Windy opened his mouth at the wrong side and let his cigar drop. "There. Why didn't I think of that before. I know how we'll pep up the act. We'll prime you with a shot of gin."

He was so well satisfied with this plan of action that I was glad to cooperate. That night before the first show I emptied some glasses for him—and such a strange effect! I plunged into my first performance with only a tiny shiver of stage fright, and suddenly I was swaying the crowd with words. Everything was starting off wonderful, and that was the last I remembered.

Windy awakened me with a dash of water. It was noon, he said, and not a good noon either.

"Didn't it work?"

"Brother, you went off the deep end," he said dolefully. "You gave them an overdose of Venus mathematics and they left with indigestion."

"I can't imagine what I said."

"You had the whole crowd counting in unison on their fingers. The place was a regular convention of centipedes. The worst was you kept saying it was simple. The Venus decimal system, you said, came off of people's twelve fingers, just like ours came off our ten. Six and six, you said, made a Venus ten. You held up your twelve fingers and said, 'Ten,' and the crowd started heckling. 'Ten times ten on Venus,' you said, 'makes a hundred forty-four on the Earth.' The people got mad but they couldn't roar you down. You ran it on to the thousands and then millions. That's when they got their gizzards full and walked out. But by george there was no stopping you. When the last show was done you hounded me through cube and root logarithms, all the time wiggling your devilish fingers in my face. I finally fell asleep trying to follow you through some problem."

"Do you remember the answer?"

"I remember it ain't a shot of gin," said Windy.

SUMMER rolled around to find the carnival still limping on its course.

At last we were in the university town again, camped on the same grounds, stirring up the same dust, and ballyhooing to what might have been the same swarms of potential customers.

Once again I caught the gleaming eyes of Pauline as she entered with the crowd. My pulse leaped with hope. She had brought her father, and I thought his thick-lensed eyes betrayed a glint of interest in me.

A tent boy mentioned in passing that a lot of important people were on hand tonight and the new act should go over big.

The new act! My nerves tightened with an instinctive rebellion. In recent days my pen had been changed. It had iron bars around it now, and in one corner an animal cage containing a chimpanzee. Windy McKean had pepped up the act.

I caught the tent boy by the sleeve. "Tell Windy I'm not going to wrestle tonight. I'm going to talk. I want all the charts on deck."

"I'll tell him but he won't like it."

A moment later Pauline had found her way to the fence and seized my hand. "George, it's so good to see you again. Why, you're in an athletic costume tonight. It's very becoming. You know that father's here? . . . No, I didn't bring him against his will Anyway he'll see the light when he hears your talk."

She rambled on excitedly, and with

the sure stimulation of her presence to guile me I suddenly knew that I would speak tonight as I had never spoken before. These people were about to be carried away on a veritable tour of the Streets of Venus.

Presently Pauline noticed the chimp. "What's that for?"

"Just a pet."

"John should have one of those. He's in the jungles now, you know. He sends you his best regards."

"Give him mine."

"I had hoped we might all have a reunion at the mountain lodge this year. But that will have to wait."

"Friends come and go," I said. "Something came between Prentice and me."

"It was your hair, George. You and Frank Prentice are both as stubborn as mules. And I'll tell him so too. Which reminds me—are all Venusians like you? If so, you aren't a lot better off than Earth folks."

I laughed. "I suspect we're all made out of the same clay. Won't the future scientists have a wonderful controversy over whether our evolutions have been distinct or related? . . . There's my bell. The crowd's all in."

DURING this brief chat Professor Neff had kept his distance. Obviously he was somewhat revolted by the noises and smells and taudry surroundings and shuffling crowds that made up a carnival. But now he made ready with a notebook and pencil. Pauline pointed this out to me. "You see, I've won."

So she thought.

But in the next minute or two while I sorted my charts at the opposite corner, a final check-up before Windy would announce my speech, I caught a wisp of conversation that chilled my Venusian bones to the marrow. Three well dressed, sharp-faced men were talking about Professor Neff.

"He's going to take notes." . . . "How's this for headlines? University Professor Glorifies Carnival's Venus Man." . . . "Why not make it Crackpot Professor?". . ."How's this? Tax Dollars Support Sensation Seeking Ethnologist.". . ."For his daughter's sake I hate to do it. The minute we build a fire under him he's on a toboggan.". . . "Hell, it's a story—a mine of 'em—rich in political smear—" Overpowering anger swept through me.

I lifted Windy's megaphone and sent a whisper to his ear as he entered the pen to make his announcement. He nodded and went into his phonographic roar. I controlled myself, listened.

". . . And here he stands, ladies and gentlemen, ready to demonstrate the physical prowess of the Earths sister planet by wrestling a chimpanzee—no, not a gorilla, because he put the only available gorilla out of commission last week—but the strongest and toughest chimp this side of the Rockies—and wrestle him, mind you, with one hand tied behind his back . . ."

Above the cheering I could imagine a trembling of earth beneath my feet as of an invisible something of great weight being dropped—my speech. But now I was glad. Yes, this would do.

With one hand tied behind me I wrestled the capricious chimp. Together we gave the funniest and most exciting match of our teamed career. I kept it going until everyone was splitting sides with laughter—everyone but Professor Neff and poor Pauline!

The professor thrust his notebook in his pocket and walked out. Pauline, on the verge of crying, followed him. That gave me an electric shudder that almost paralyzed me, for I knew she would never have any faith in a venusian again. I kept going, somehow, and fi-

nally I locked the chimp in a corner and held him there long enough to cock an ear toward the three reporters.

". . . join you birds around the bonfire . . . burn up those no-good headlines . . . You won't catch Neff falling for any cheap hoax . . ." Then I knew everything was all right—for Pauline and her father. As for me—well, it didn't make any difference.

Late that night I looked at the planet Venus through the carnival telescope and came to a decision. Homesickness did it.

CHAPTER IX

Whom to Kidnap?

WHOM TO take with me? I knew only a few well enough to justify their consideration: the carnival people—Windy and the big boss and the Polish acrobats and a few other staunch friends; and my mountain friends—Prentice, John Vonada, Pauline and her father. Beyond these, my prospects could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

My choice may not have been a perfect one. In four years I may not have been treated to a perfectly balanced view of the Earth world.

I might have chosen Lieutenant John Vonada. Venus couldn't ask for a finer specimen of Earth's manhood, a master of skills and daring. But the Earth needed John too much at this time. He couldn't be spared.

Nor could I take his sweetheart. She was his great reason for fighting. Together they were a unit of the Earth's truest happiness, which I hadn't the heart to break.

But there was Paline's father, a man of great learning, who would have much of interest to give my people. I pondered this matter for a long time. The choice wasn't right. Somehow Professor Neff's understanding of his own world had been too much pared down by rules of logic and sliced into statistical tables.

Frank Prentice? A wonderful fellow. But how would he thrive if he were uprooted from his own solid and substantial mountain doorstep? What but punishment would it be to surround him with millions of people imbued with the doctrines of pluuvonng?

Thus by a process of elimination my choice was made.

That night I awakened Windy McKean and asked him if he'd like to ramble up the mountain and have a look at my hidden ship.

There were some taverns along the way, and it was high noon the next day when we reached the black fiber ladder. I followed him up to the shelf.

"I see you got stout and busted your ladder on that last step," said Windy as he crawled over the edge of rock.

"I don't remember breaking it," I said. But there was no denying that the fiber had been broken and tied together at the last crossrope. A chill struck my spine. "The ship—is it there?"

I leaped onto the shelf, raced past Windy, threw aside the first screen of boughs.

"Must be something holding all those limbs up," said Windy. "But I'll still be surprised if you've got a ship. Well, blow me down. Live and learn."

I tossed the screens of boughs aside, and the familiar metallic gleam met my eyes. There she stood in all her glory, ready to take my passenger and me—but someone else was there!

"Hello, George. We're waiting for you. Hope you don't mind."

It was Frank Prentice. He stepped around the nose of the ship and came toward me. Somehow I wasn't surprised, at least not shocked. Somehow

I wanted him to know—to see for himself this space conqueror that I had kept secret from him.

It was good to see that old friendly smile again. "Frank, how did you know to come here? When did you what I intended to——"

But now I *was* surprised, for with him came Pauline and her father, and the doctor who had once bandaged my arm, and two state policemen in blue uniforms, and a newsman with a camera. They swarmed around like a surprise birthday party.

"A whole carnival crowd," Windy muttered. "And me with not even a bag of popcorn to sell."

I must have been unconsciously retreating toward the ladder, for in the confusion of this moment I remember that Pauline came running toward me, beckoning with both hands and calling to me not to leave.

"We have big news for you, George. We've all had a share in it—Uncle Frank and Dad and all the rest. I think you'll like it."

"I think I know," I murmured with not much of my deep voice coming through. "You're going to send me to an institution?"

"To one of the world's greatest," said Frank, smiling. "To the nation's capitol at Washington. You have an appointment with the Secretary of State. He wishes to meet the Ambassador from Venus."

For a second time on the Earth I came very near to fainting. Windy had something in a bottle that he poured on a handkerchief to cool my face. Shortly after that I heard him mutter some derogatory remarks about the highbrow society of Washington. No, thanks, he wouldn't care for the space ship ride with us to meet the Secretary of State. He climbed down the ladder and was gone.

THE Washington welcome was all that any ambassador from any planet in the universe could ask for. All at once the invitations were pouring in from all sides. The newspapers were screaming their sensational headlines, and the pictures of the Secretary of State and I were everywhere. It was uncanny. The whole world seemed suddenly electrified by the fact that I had cruised through space from Venus to the Earth—the very fact that I had been telling people for months and months! It had filtered through, at last. Once the scientists had feasted their eyes upon my ship (through the courtesy of Frank Prentice) they had wasted not a minute in putting me over with Washington!

Of the hundreds of photographs that came out of two busy weeks of welcome, my three favorites were, first, the one of Pauline and Prentice standing in amazement behind a table heaped high with mail and telegrams; second, the picture of Windy McKean standing out in front of my carnival tent looking up at the incredible art, trying to convince himself that he had known all along; and third, the photo that I've just received by radio of the Secretary of State and myself, snapped as we were stepping aboard for a bit of joyride.

Well, people of America, please don't be angry. Any good Washington official deserves a little relaxation now and then. And this secretary was such a congenial gentleman that all at once it came to me that here was the very man to extend official greetings to Venus.

So we're merrily on our way. And if you'll forgive me for this act of kidnapping, we'll come back again some day.

That growl you hear is the secretary. This escapade wasn't his idea, and he's trying to tell me it's unconstitutional. But he'll be all right as soon as he gets to Venus and tries our osserfeli steaks —unrationed!

Cursed Cavern

There was light up ahead and Jim Casey's captor urged him forward

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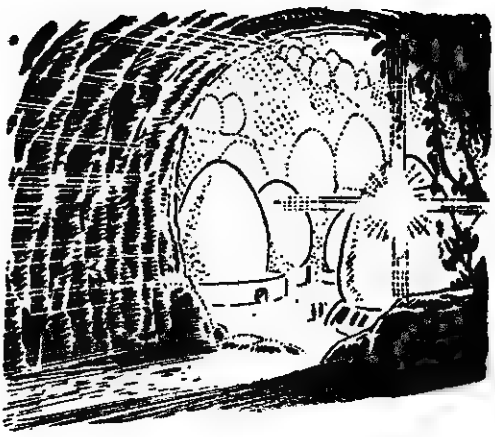


By LEE FRANCIS

IT WAS a strange beauty parlor where these ugly gnomes went to become handsome men!

THE village of Mammoth was blanketed with rain. Rain pounded down on the squat line of government buildings and sent a white spray bouncing from the sidewalks. Above the village, sending up hot steam against the cold downpour, the hot springs bubbled and seethed like desolate cauldrons of the underworld. Dense vapors hung over everything.

Linda Palmer decided that there was no beauty in Mammoth. She stood near the door of the bus, suitcase clutched firmly in one hand as the vehicle halted in front of the hotel.

The people who descended with her were silent and disappointed. They had to spend three months here and the arrival during a heavy storm didn't give them much hope for the future.

Linda followed a group of college students who seemed to know where they were going. She entered the almost deserted lobby. Her instructions were to report to the desk. Ten minutes later she found herself assigned to a small pleasant room facing the high, burned-grass hill behind the hotel.

She unpacked her bag while still under the influence of the dull rain that pelted against the window. A vast loneliness grew within her. She sat on the edge of the bed and stared out of the window.

This wasn't what she had expected.

The trip up the steep winding canyon road had frightened her. Rain made the smooth surface slippery and dangerous. The Yellowstone River was swollen into an angry snake that lashed and pounded down the canyon threatening to tear out the very bridge that the bus crossed.

Her first view of Mammoth was of a deserted square blocked in by ugly gray buildings. Here were the houses of government families, the hospital and the museum.

The hot springs were ugly. They looked from a distance like a mass of steaming horrible brew, symbolic of a sullen underworld that might at any moment crack open and spew forth the white hot vitals of the earth.

Linda thought of Jim Casey. Jim had promised to come this week end. Four days alone before she could see

him. She smiled and some of the color came back into her face. She rose and stood before the mirror. In the mirror she saw a slim straight-limbed girl with wheat-colored hair that hung in graceful curls around her neck. Deep blue eyes were filled with mist. There was something behind that mist. Something that she could betray to no one, because she hoped it would be gone before Jim arrived.

Behind those eyes was a reflection of stark fear.

A foolish, unreasonable fear had taken hold of her when she left the train. Fear that clutched her heart and made her hate the hotel, the village, and, most of all, the boiling, steaming pools of water that gurgled out of the earth, hissing their defiance to the upper world.

It was silly for her to be frightened. Yet there must be more to it than met the eye. With a shrug of her slim shoulders, she found a comb and brush in her bag and started brushing out the long hair. Then she realized how hungry she had become. She changed her dress and prepared to go down for dinner.

Before she did this, she lowered the shade against the sullen, treeless hill and against the storm. It was a foolish gesture. She realized this even as she did it. No one could see her from that dead outside world.

Half undressed, she shivered violently. The room was warm, but her body felt like ice. She kicked off both shoes and sank down on the bed, face buried in the pillow. Her body shook and she held the pillow tightly against her ears, hiding the sound of the rain. Hiding from God knew what. She didn't. Hiding, perhaps, from her own unfounded fear of tragedy about to strike.

WALTER FREEDLY stopped in front of the small cabin and rolled down the car window. Freedly had that excited, pioneering grin on his face that marks people who have wanted to see the world for a long time and have at last broken away from the ties of the armchair to carry out their wish.

A rain-coated figure emerged from the cabin and approached the car.

"Picked a bad day to come in," the Ranger said. He had a shock of red hair that emerged in spots from under his hat. He didn't seem to mind the rain.

Freedly matched the grin.

"Wife and I have been planning this Yellowstone trip for ten years," he said. "It'll take a lot more than rain to keep us from enjoying it."

He answered half a dozen questions, said that he didn't have any guns to be sealed, accepted a pass and a sticker for the windshield and paid the entrance fee. Baby Joe was crying out his lungs in the back seat; and Jean, God bless her, was trying to keep the kid quiet.

The Ranger started to turn away, then pivoted and faced Freedly again.

"Better drive slow up the canyon," he said. "The road's pretty wet. Bus damn near skidded into the river this morning."

Freedly nodded. "These roads are plenty crooked after living all your life in Nebraska."

The Ranger chuckled. "After you're here a while, you car will drive itself," he said. "The steering wheel gets a permanent curve in it after a little exercising."

He was silent for a moment and baby Joe's crying filled the gap. The Ranger peered into the rear seat, saw Jean Freedly and touched the brim of his hat.

"Better get that baby to bed as soon as you get to Mammoth," he said. "The

hotel company has some nice cabins. Drive through town and on up the Golden Gate road. You'll find the cabins on the left hand side of the road opposite the springs."

Jean muttered an appropriate "thank you" and Walter Freedly pushed the clutch down and shifted into low gear.

"Thanks for all the kind service," he said. "I hope this weather doesn't last."

The Ranger was backing toward the warmth of the cabin.

"Tomorrow there won't be a cloud in the sky," he said. "And the sky here is the highest, bluest sky you've ever seen."

The car picked up speed and rounded a right curve into the narrow canyon.

Walter Freedly's face still glowed with excitement.

In the rear seat of the car, Joe Freedly, age one year, would not stop crying. It worried his mother, Jean, and the comely-faced woman wondered if something was hurting the child. She had given him a bottle of milk, but he pushed it away, screaming. It was a scream of terror, unabated and growing louder as the car climbed up the steep twisting road toward Mammoth. They came out on the flats, passed through the tiny town and went upward again, at last reaching the cabins and the long low hotel constructed of native logs.

IN ANOTHER half hour the Freedlys were warmly at home in a two-room cabin. Walter removed his shoes and sank back on one of the beds. Joe had at last grown quiet and was sleeping in the other room.

"Walter—" Jean Freedly was washing from a basin of water her husband had carried from the tap outside. "I'm —I'm worried about Joe."

Walter Freedly turned half around, cushioned his head on his arm and stared at his wife's strong capable back.

"He'll be all right," he said. "Maybe the altitude bothers him. It does some people, at first. They even get bloody noses from this thin air. Joe will be all right."

Jean continued to wash. Her dark hair gleamed under the single, naked light bulb. She was still very pretty, endowed with that youthful fresh appearance that keeps some women over thirty from growing sloppy.

"It's something else," she said. "He cried harder than I've ever heard him cry before. Walter, I know this sounds odd, but I'd swear that Joe is frightened of something."

Walter Freedly smiled, snorted good-naturedly.

"For instance?"

She turned to face him and her face was very red.

"I knew you'd laugh at me, but it's like that time the big tom cat scratched Joe. He screamed then, and he wouldn't have anything else to do with cats. He screamed like that again today, Walter."

Walter Freedly stood up. Frowning, he moved to the window and stared out at the row upon row of identical cabins. He too was worred about Joe, but he wouldn't admit it. He was worried about Jean and himself. If Joe continued to act this way, their whole vacation would be ruined. The vacation had grown from a dream. It was their first great adventure together, and they had been saving for it for over ten years.

"I guess I noticed Joe more than I let you know," he admitted. "He *does* seem pretty badly stirred up. He's resting better now, though, isn't he?"

Jean nodded.

"He's sleeping," she admitted. "But he keeps sobbing in his sleep."

Through the window, Walter Freedly could see people dashing from one cabin to another with coats thrown over their

heads. He could just make out the hill and the steaming hot springs up beyond the road. He had seen very little of Yellowstone thus far, but the Ranger said that tomorrow would be bright and the sky clear. His spirits rose. He turned, crossed the room and put his arms around Jean. He felt awkward and of little value to her when she was worried.

Her lips met his and he kissed her tenderly.

"We'll all feel better in the morning," he said softly. "The sun will cure all that's wrong with us."

She nodded ever so slightly, but there were tears in her eyes.

"*I hope so,*" *she said.* "I wouldn't want to spoil your good time. We've both been planning this for so long, I don't think I could take it. . . ."

He released her and found his coat behind the door.

"I'm going to take a look around," he said. "There must be a store close by."

He turned as he reached the door and looked back. Jean was staring at him, her lips opened, fright plainly etched on her plain face.

"Walter—it's the way Joe screamed and fought against everything I tried to do for him that worries me. Walter, do you believe that babies can see things that we cannot?"

The question upset him so badly that for a moment he was going to swear aloud.

"Jean," he said sharply. "What made you say that?"

"I guess it sounds wild," she said slowly. "But a fortune teller told me once that I should beware when the baby senses danger. I thought, back in that canyon, that maybe Joe sensed an accident. Then, when we reached here safely I wondered. There *is* a strange, unholy feeling about this place. It's the storm, and—and those awful springs, boiling and seething out of the earth. The earth trembles and you can feel it going to pieces underneath . . ."

She paused. "I'm a fool," she added abruptly and turned away.

Freedly went out, closing the door quietly behind him. Did children sense tragedy that older eyes cannot see? He trudged toward the hotel. His vacation was certainly getting off to a hell of a start.

JENNY WALKER bustled around the tiny interior of the trailer and pulled the heavy curtains tightly together. Jenny Walker had driven a thousand miles this spring, and her urge to see as many places as possible before fall had brought her into the tourist camp below Mammoth Hot Springs. Now that she was here, she didn't like it.

Jenny had no family ties. No ties at all except for grumpy Fred Stark. She sniffed, returned to the camp stove and started to pump air into it. Fred Stark indeed! He was driving up from Denver. In fact, he'd be here tomorrow morning, barring floods and wash-outs. Oh, yes, he'd be here.

Jenny was puffing by the time the stove was ready to light. She realized that a woman of sixty, fat around the waistline and trying not to show it, could never fool herself. She was getting old, Jenny was, and if Fred Stark wanted to start that lovey-dovey stuff *this* time, he might find that he had a handful of trouble. She was almost ready to become Mrs. Fred Stark and settle in Denver for the remainder of her too few years.

Odd, but the feeling of a few minutes back came again. She felt the hair on her neck prickle, and her hands shook as she reached under the stove for the coffee pot.

It was the feeling one gets when someone, or *something*, is staring at the back of your neck. She turned quickly —not frightened, just jumpy. The door was locked. Every curtain was drawn snugly. Still, she couldn't throw off that prickly feeling.

She went to the door, threw it open quickly and stared out into the night. The air seemed vibrant and alive. It was getting cold, and the lights in the cafeteria a short distance from the camp cut through the windows and made weird designs on the ground outside.

The tents and trailers around her were silent, dark. Sagebrushers turned in early to escape memories of the hot dusty road.

Outside of one dilapidated starved-looking bear that prowled near the garbage cans, no movement took place in the camp area. She shivered, this time from the cold, and closed the door. She slipped both bolts into place.

It was warm inside. After she ate she didn't feel like sleeping. Far away up the hill beyond Mammoth, the hot springs were making queer slobbering sounds. It had rained all day, but from the looks of the sky, tomorrow would be much better.

She crawled into the small bed wedged into one end of the trailer and stretched her weary body. Still sleep wouldn't come.

She swore softly to herself.

"Damned imagination will be the death of me. Imagine anyone spying on an old bag like me."

With an angry snort, she wrapped the bed clothes around her and buried her head in the pillow. Tomorrow would bring Fred Stark from Denver and she would marry him and get the hell out of this place. It was dreary and desolate for all the dozens of families that slept around her. Suddenly she hated Yellowstone and the ugly, spouting fires of the underground that sent hot water thundering into the sky. The last thing Jenny Walker remembered as she slipped into fitful slumber was that a naked eye, huge and the color of blood just seemed to stare at her between the not entirely closed curtains at the far end of the trailer. It wasn't a pleasant idea, but she credited it to imagination and hid her face deeper into the pillow. She had to get some sleep.

RANGER FRANK YOUNG picked up the telephone from his desk in the administration building and spoke in a low, naturally friendly voice.

"Young speaking."

The voice at the far end of the line was high-pitched with excitement. He recognized Jerry Sloan, desk clerk at the hotel.

"Mr. Young, for God's sake hurry over here. Something terrible has happened."

Young reached for his wide-brimmed hat, still holding the phone in his other hand.

"What's up?" Nothing in his voice betrayed excitement. Young was forty and brown and hard as most of the park men were. He had faced everything from bears to bootleggers and didn't rise quickly to any bait.

"A girl has disappeared." Sloan's voice was strained to the cracking point. There was no faking the fear evident in his words. "One of our waitresses has disappeared."

Ranger Young dropped the hat once more and chuckled.

"Probably out rotten-logging with some nice Ranger," he said. "I wouldn't worry too—"

"Wait!" Genuine panic was in Sloan's voice. "It isn't that. It isn't that at all. There's someone, *something* in Miss Palmer's room."

Young's jaw tightened.

"Let's start all over again," he urged.

He could hear Sloan catch his breath. He sounded somewhat calmer when he spoke again.

"A friend of Miss Palmer called her this morning. When the girl didn't answer she went in. There was—there *still* is something horrible in Miss Palmer's bed. I—I— Oh, for God's sake, Young, come over here! I think Miss Palmer's been murdered."

"Why didn't you say so?"

Young dropped the phone, sprang to his feet and went toward the door. He turned and spoke to the ranger who sat before the radio control board.

"Tell the boss I'm at the hotel, Pete. Someone is in trouble over there."

Pete looked up, grinned and nodded.

"Young to the rescue," he said. "I—"

Young was already out of hearing distance. His boots pounded loudly on the long, straight flight of stairs. The administration building was close to the hotel. Young didn't stop running until he stood before the hotel desk. The lobby was quiet. Evidently Sloan hadn't spoken to anyone. Sloan was pale-faced, bald-headed, a little man. He grasped a bunch of keys as he saw Young enter, and rounded the end of the desk.

"This way," he said.

RANGER FRANK YOUNG stood at the foot of the bed, staring with shocked eyes at the thing on the bed. No amount of imagination could convince him that this corpse had ever been an attractive girl. Linda Palmer had been a fresh lovely person. This—well!

The corpse was evidently a woman, for the hair was long and stringy. It wore a garment composed, as nearly as he could see, of black burlap. The arms and legs were scrawny to a point where the bones showed through at every joint. The face was the worst. It was composed mostly of two staring, sightless eyes. The eyes were nearly two inches across, and bloody red. The nose had been mashed down at birth so that it covered the entire middle of her face. The mouth was wide, grinning and absolutely toothless.

"Brown," Sloan said. "The whole body brown and withered like—like it was a mummy."

His voice broke the spell. Young jerked his eyes away from the thing and faced Jerry Sloan.

"You haven't found any trace of the girl?"

Sloan shook his head slowly from side to side. His eyes were glued to the monster on the bed. He seemed hypnotised.

"It isn't human."

Young agreed with him. It wasn't. He turned to the writing desk and picked up the picture of Linda Palmer. She was lovely, if he could judge by the fair complexion of the face that stared at him from the portrait. Her hair, fine and curling gently about a soft throat, was like spun silver.

"I haven't seen this girl around," he said.

"This is her first year," Sloan offered. "Works for the railroad as hostess. Got transferred up here for her vacation. She said she was expecting a boy friend this week end."

Young nodded.

"Lucky guy," he said, then frowned. "But—where in hell could she have gone to? I'd still guess that she went out with some ninety day wonder and forgot to come home. It's—it's that thing on the bed that got me stumped."

Sloan said: "Me too. I haven't told anyone about it. I thought I'd better speak to you first."

Young nodded.

"That's right," he said. "I'll have

some of the boys come up for it. We can carry it out the back way."

He reached for the phone, but it rang before he could pick it up. He stepped away and motioned to Sloan to answer. Sloan picked up the phone and said, "Jerald Sloan speaking."

The babble of a voice filled the silent room. Young looked again at the creature on the bed. Its limbs were stretched in an awkward, gangling position.

"It's for you," Sloan said. "The Lodge called because Pete said you were over here."

Young took the phone.

"Hello," he said. "That you, Herb?"

He heard neat litte Herbert Jennings, manager up at the Lodge, sputtering loudly.

"Some tourists up here say they lost their baby," he said. "They're driving me nuts."

Young's breath sucked in sharply.

"That all?"

"No," Jennings said. "They—"

"Probably found a goblin in its crib," Young said in a terse voice.

He heard Jennings moan.

"That's exactly what they said," he cried. "How in hell did you—?"

"I'm a mind reader," Young said, and looked at Sloan. "Keep them as calm as possible. I'm on my way up."

JEAN FREEDLY was an attractive woman in her middle thirties. Now, however, her face was so streaked with tears as she sat stiffly in Jennings's office, that all the beauty had fled. There was only stark terror in those large brown eyes. Walter Freedly, a tall, rather gaunt man with a friendly mouth and seamed face had better control of himself. His hand, where it gripped the top of his wife's chair, was white and bloodless.

Herb Jennings, the manager of the Lodge, paced back and forth across the bear rug that covered most of the floor.

"We haven't been down to the cabin since you talked with me on the phone," he told Young. "That remark you made. What's it all about?"

Young wasn't smiling now. This was a problem involving human lives.

"I'd rather say nothing," he said, "until I hear Mr. and Mrs. Freedly's story."

Jean Freedly started to sob. She tried to speak but her husband interrupted.

"I'll tell him, dear," he said. "Don't try to talk now."

He looked straight at Young with hard, unwavering eyes.

"It's the most ghastly thing I've ever seen," he said. "The baby—his name is Joe—cried all evening. We went to bed about eleven. Joe gave up about midnight and we thought he'd gone to sleep. Once, about two in the morning, I guess, I thought I heard a bear walking around outside. I've heard how they act and didn't pay any attention to the noise."

He took a long breath.

"Come down to the cabin with me," he said.

Jean Freedly started to rise but her husband forced her gently back into the chair.

"You'd better stay here with Mr. Jennings," he said.

Together, Freedly and Young went down the line of cabins and into a double. Freedly approached the partition that separated the two rooms.

"Take a look," he said. His face was pale. "I'd rather not."

Young knew what he was going to see. Knew it before he opened the door and stared down at the grotesque dead body of the tiny dwarf. It shook him badly, though, the unclean brown flesh, huge red eyes hidden among the blue baby blankets that covered the bed. He closed the door q u i c k l y. Freedly's hand

touched his arm and he spun around.

"I'm just an ordinary guy," Freedly said, and his eyes were strangely dead and colorless. "But—what the hell caused this? It—it isn't human, is it?"

Young's lips were pressed in a hard bloodless line.

"It may not be human," he said, "but may the Lord protect the devils that are responsible for all this."

JENNY WALKER'S trailer was deserted. Not a trace of her could be found. It was Fred Stark, tall, gaunt and fiftyish who reported her disappearance at the park administration building. Now, in her trailer, he talked quietly with Ranger Young. Stark was a westerner, partially bald with a fringe of snow hair around his scalp. His long, tanned fingers clenched and unclenched as he talked.

"I don't know what happened to Jenny," he told Young in a cool, hard voice, "but if they harmed a hair of her head, I'll make up a lynching party for them."

Young nodded sympathetically. He was only half listening to Stark. His mind went back to the lovely girl who had disappeared from the hotel bed. To the baby who had changed places with a dead goblin. Perhaps it was better for himself and Stark that Jenny Walker's bed *was* empty—that the supply of mummy-like corpses had seemingly run out. A man's brain could absorb about so much. After that—well, he might blow up completely.

A HEAVY brown-skinned figure crouched in the underbrush behind the Coffee Shop. Here a ravine cut deeply into the hills. The ravine was filled with evergreens and a lush growth of deep grass and flowering plants.

The sun was high in the sky overhead. It was the day after Linda Palmer's disappearance.

The brown figure might have been called fat. Large, unhealthy wrinkles of flesh hung from its body. The hands and feet were bony and impregnated with dirt where it had crawled forward slowly, weakly, pulling itself without strength, with only will power to go on.

Now it rested, dull red eyes staring wildly out of the undergrowth watching men and women as they toiled up the slopes toward the springs. It lay very still, panting with the heat. The eyes blinked from time to time in panic, as sounds came from near by.

The afternoon died. The tourists retreated toward the hotel. A long line of buses drove away from the hotel up beyond the lodge. The creature listened dumbly as the sounds of the powerful motors died away, going up the road toward the Golden Gate and the Canyon.

The sun went down and the hidden creature could hear singing from the building behind the Coffee Shop. College boys were holding a party in their dormitory. But the sound was strange to the brown figure and it shook its head angrily, trying to escape the noise.

It started to crawl again into the open and up the rough stony flank of the hill.

The springs were terraced and boiling water ran down from pool to pool. The earth shook and cracked underneath seeking a weak spot in the crust to break through. The sluggish snail-like pace of the creature carried it around the pools and toward the crest of the hill. The moon rose and the thing slowed its pace, breathing fast, staring back wildly at the silent, moonlit town.

The black shadow of a man detached himself from the building near the Coffee Shop and started slowly up the sidewalk toward the hot springs. The man came on slowly, without hesitation. The brown-skinned creature lurched

desperately to its feet and started to run. Its pace was awkward but it managed to reach the board walk that led toward the crest of the hill and Devil's Kitchen.

A cry arose behind it and staring wildly back, it saw the man gather speed and start to run toward it.

With a scream, the brown creature ran toward the gash in the earth that led down into Devil's Kitchen. It reached the long flight of wooden steps that went into the abyss below. Here, in the very shadow of safety, it stumbled.

Ranger Frank Young stopped short, the stifling horrible scream drifting down to him. His teeth clamped together and he felt the hair on his neck stand up straight. He reached for his revolver, released the safety and started to run again, upward toward Devil's Kitchen. He knew every inch of the deep black gash at the crest of the hill.

He reached the rail that protected tourists from falling to their deaths. He whipped a flash light from his pocket and shot the powerful white beam down the wooden steps toward the bottom of the pit.

He didn't have to go down, not then. He knew why there had been no corpse in Jenny Walker's bed. At the bottom of the stairs was the twisted, grotesque body of Jenny Walker's inhuman caricature. It had evidently been left for dead and revived itself enough to try what almost became a successful escape.

He had wondered why two beds had been left occupied while the third was empty. That problem had sent him on a search that ended, of all places, at Devil's Kitchen.

He took a few steps downward, sending the beam of light around the smooth bare stone walls. He didn't look at the ugly corpse again. He heard the walls far below groaning and cracking from underground pressure. Bats flew back and forth, stirred from their sleep by the intruding light.

Young backed up the stairs and stood for a long time, staring away at the velvety star-pricked sky. Had he found a clue? Did he know where the strange people came from? Devil's Kitchen had no lower entrance. It was a warm, stony pit in the earth that went nowhere. Unless . . .

Perhaps the stones cracked and groaned for a purpose. Perhaps they opened when necessary to allow these spawn from Hell to climb up into the upper world. He turned away and went down the trail slowly. The gun was still clutched tightly in his right hand. His knuckles were white and his fingers were so tight around the barrel of the pistol that they ached. He could feel the perspiration on his face.

THE group of men made themselves more or less comfortable in the bare pine-furnished room at the head of the stairs. In one corner, Pete, the radio man, talked continually over the short wave. Chief Ranger Tom Walker sat behind the desk. Walker wasn't sure just what he was waiting for because, so far as he could see, there was no solution to the problem he faced. Frank Young had related to him the entire story of the missing tourists. Young also told Walker what he had seen at Devil's Kitchen. As yet the others knew nothing of the incident.

Walker looked around at the solemn-faced men. Fred Stark, Denver lawyer, gray, hard and determined. Freedly, the father of the lost baby, his eyes strangely red, fists clenched, puffing steadily on a cigarette. The newcomer, James Casey had introduced himself and Walker liked the slim, dark-skinned boy very much. Casey, it

seemed, was wildly in love with the girl who had disappeared from the hotel.

Walker shook his head. His lean, wrinkled face was a study.

"I've asked you to come up here for a twofold reason," he said. Every man in the room stopped talking and stared hopefully at him. "Ranger Young has given me all the details and I confess I'm stumped."

The eyes that watched him wavered. Some of them studied the floor. Not a sound interrupted his train of thought.

"Three people, one of them a child, have disappeared seemingly from the face of the earth." Walker arose then, his figure arced easily across the top of the desk. "What troubles me more are the circumstances under which all this happened."

He didn't wait for them to speak. No one had anything to say. They waited for him to continue.

"This has all been reported to the police. However, because of the queer, almost ghoul-like corpses that were found, we are asking that no publicity be given us, at least for the present."

Walter Freedly fidgeted. He pressed the coal from his cigarette and tossed it to the floor.

"But meanwhile, what about Joe? What of the others? We've got to find them before it's—"

His voice broke.

"I know how you feel, Mr. Freedly," Walker said, "but this isn't an ordinary kidnaping. It's something worse—far worse."

The room was hot and he mopped his forehead with a clean handkerchief.

"I'd like Young to tell you what he saw last night. I think it will give you some idea of what we're up against."

Young told his story quietly, without dramatics. When he had finished, he said:

"I went up to the Kitchen this morning with half a dozen Rangers. We were going to bring down that—that body. We looked high and low for it but it was gone."

Mr. Stark growled something low in his throat.

"Mr. Stark?"

"I said we'd better get some action pretty soon or by God, I'll start tearing this park down stone by stone. Something's got to be done."

Frank Walker's face was very grave.

"Just where can we start? We might post a guard at Devil's Kitchen. It looks as though the things we are dealing with aren't—"

"—aren't human," Jim Casey said in a calm voice. "Well, human or not, they can die. We've found that out already. They're coming from somewhere and it looks as though it's from underground. I, for one, am going to buy the best rifle I can find and go hunting."

"Just a minute." Young sprang to his feet. "We can't start a panic among the other tourists. I know how every one of you feels. That's why I've tried to figure out some intelligent plan for action."

He crossed the room and threw open the door to a small closet. It contained racks and on the racks were gleaming rifles.

"Government equipment," he said. "Ordinarily we seal all guns in the park. Starting tonight, we will station men at Devil's Kitchen. We'll cover that place from every angle, above and below."

He looked at Chief-Ranger Walker, and Walker nodded.

"Because you men have reason to want to see this thing through, I'm swearing you all in as officers of the law. Tonight, when there is no danger of you being seen with firearms, I'll issue a rifle to each of you. You can take turns with the regular Rangers, standing guard up on the hill."

He paused and sighed.

"It's a new way of handling law and order," he said. "We'll let the police cover the other channels. I've got a hunch that our problem hinges on what happens up there at Devil's Kitchen. I play my hunches. Is it a deal?"

They backed him up, each in his own way. Freedly stood up, chain-lighted another cigarette and chewed hard on it.

"Let me line my sights up on the one who took Joe, and I'll find out where Joe is or die trying."

"Good," Walker said. "Then tonight we'll go hunting for these beasts of the underground. Good luck, and depend on me to do everything I can."

TO JIM CASEY, Yellowstone and the hot springs were not strange. He had driven a bus here for two summers, worked as dish washer during another. Now, in the traffic branch of the Northern Pacific, Casey found little time for vacations. This one was to be his first opportunity to see Linda Palmer away from her job and they had planned to see all the places he had told her of.

Casey stood fifteen feet from the top of Devil's Kitchen, his supple body against a gnarled pine, rifle balanced easily in the crook of his arm. He couldn't analyze his thoughts of what was happening or rather what *wasn't* happening. He had arrived late, only to hear the strange story of what had happened from Ranger Frank Young.

Thinking about it, he swore softly and fingered the trigger of the rifle. It was an expensive model, accurate and powerful. He wondered how he would know, in the dark, if he was firing at friend or foe.

His eyes were wide, trying to pierce the blackness around the head of the shaft that led into the earth. He looked at his wrist watch and when he looked up again, something was moving near the top of the steps that led out of the shaft. He started to lift his rifle.

"Take it easy, Casey." Young's voice was steady. "Nothing happening down there."

He came toward Casey and Casey's rifle settled back in his arm.

"I left two Rangers down below," Young said. "I wanted to talk to you."

"Go ahead," Casey said.

"About what we're doing," Young went on. "Do you think I'm crazy?"

Casey shrugged.

"No one is crazy when he's helping me find the girl I love. If they harm Linda . . . "

Young put a hand on Jim Casey's shoulder.

"I got a hunch that I'm right," he said. "Somehow Devil's Kitchen and those monsters are connected. The one that fell down the stairs was trying to go somewhere. Trying to struggle back to where it came from. I'm sure of that."

"You don't have to try to convince me," Casey said. "We all believe in you. It may take time to prove it."

"Thanks." Young turned and went back toward the shaft. As he did so, a voice, hollow and far away, drifted up from below.

"Young."

Young increased his pace, and Jim Casey took several curious steps after him. Then the call came again, but this time it wasn't casual. It was a half-choked scream. A scream that rose and fell suddenly, leaving only the echo, unbroken silence.

"Casey!" Young shouted. "Follow me!"

The order wasn't necessary. Casey broke into a swift run. He hit the top of the stairs—to see Young, already half way to the bottom. He missed every other step, half running, half falling to-

ward the bottom of the shaft. It was warm down there. It was like the inside of an ink well, with Young's flashlight tracing clean trails of light across the floor. Casey reached the bottom and stood still, listening.

DEVIL'S KITCHEN had evidently been formed when the earth split and wrenched itself apart under the pressure from below. The walls pressed in closely and trails led away in two directions from the bottom of the stairs. Young evidently knew where the call had come from.

Close behind Young, Casey rounded a small turn in the cavern and stopped short. Young was standing there, rifle gripped in one hand, flashlight searching frantically back and forth across the cave. There was something futile about that beam of light, searching without finding what it searched for. Young whirled around and ran past Casey in the opposite direction. He didn't speak. He was panting. Knowing nothing better to do, Casey followed and together they covered every inch of the cavern. At last Young turned and faced him. His face was white. The flashlight shook in his hand.

"Gone," he said. "Ten minutes ago there were two men down here, armed with rifles. Now—not a trace of them."

Casey stared back grimly.

"We're sure of one thing," he said. "There *is* another way out of here. *Those poor devils took it.*"

YOUNG took no further chances. He posted Casey, Freedly, Fred Stark and himself in the cave. Above, around the entrance were four of his best men. No one spoke now. A grimness mixed with awful uncertainty took hold of them. They waited—for what or for how long they didn't dare guess. Their weapons were flashlights against the darkness and rifles against—they hated to guess what.

It was an odd situation. Waiting there in the dark, poised to throw light or lead in any direction at a moment's notice. Wondering who would first cry out.

Jim Casey remembered that choked, terrible cry that summoned Young. Casey was standing near Fred Stark far into one of the narrow niches that led to a blind alley at the far end of the cave. They had been waiting together for half an hour. Casey heard Stark fumble for a cigar, tear the cellophane from it and the sound of Stark's teeth tearing at the end of the weed was quite audible in the silence. Then Stark cursed almost in a whisper and tossed the cigar to the floor. It might betray them. Casey wondered how it would feel to have the enemy this close to you in the dark. Stark's figure was faintly visible and as Casey strained his eyes to make out more of his new found companion, it seemed to him that the cave was growing slightly lighter. Stark's whole body could be seen in a crazy, yellow half light.

At first he thought it was a trick his eyes were playing. Then, before he had entirely grasped the truth, he heard Stark's breathing as it grew louder, tense.

"Look behind you."

Stark's words were no more than a whisper but they startled him. He whirled around and a small pebble shot from under his shoe and bounced down the rocks. The sound seemed loud, though above ground it would have gone unnoticed.

Casey saw the opening in the rocks. Saw the clear, yellow light that came from beyond, blinding him and sending his hand to his eyes. Then Stark's voice rose in a warning shout. It was too late.

A half dozen short, animal-like figures shot into the cave. Casey tried to lift his rifle, but one of them knocked it from his hands. He couldn't remember much about what happened after that. Something hit his left shoulder a terrific blow and he went down under the weight of his attackers. He heard Stark cry out again and tried to shout.

"Young, Freed. . . ."

The opening that led into that strange, yellow world was wide. Through it poured a horde of deformed gnomes. Casey struggled to free himself, but it was useless. Still clinging tightly to his rifle, he was dragged through the opening. The light blinded him and searing, fiery pain tore deep into his shoulder.

Teeth—tearing his shoulder apart.

"Young . . ." His voice was low and a broken sob.

After that, the light blanked out.

JIM CASEY felt the pain in his shoulder first. It throbbed and ached as he tried to move his arm. Then the old pain came back, like a knife tearing a fresh wound. He didn't open his eyes. He lay very still, trying to suppress the groaning sound that came from his lips.

"Waken."

The word was spoken gently, urgently.

He opened his eyes and stared at the creature who had spoken. The face that stared down at him was very strange. He realized that his naked body was covered with a warm, white blanket of extremely light material. That he was in a room shaped like the inside of an egg shell, with pale ivory walls through which warmth and light poured continually. His nurse, if nurse she was, was ugly to the point of being disgusting. Casey looked her over carefully as she crouched beside him on her knees, watching him with brown, interested eyes. She might be young, for her body looked slim. It was brown, though, and encased in a cloth of the same color that made her look like something peering from the inside of a burlap bag. Her eyes were large and studied him from a wrinkled face. The woman looked half alive, half mummified.

"Waken," she said again. "Waken."

The voice was flat, expressionless, like a record repeating its message without thought.

"I'm awake," he said impatiently, and started to sit up. The pain in his shoulder was too much and he sank back, groaning. At once she was on her feet, skinny brown hands touching the bandage on his shoulder.

"Must be careful," she said. "Must not move shoulder."

All this time their voices were the only sounds within the room. It was as though he had been hidden under a bell. As though nothing in the world existed other than the bell and he and the creature who cared for him. He remembered the fight in the Devil's Kitchen and Young. What had happened to Young and the others?

"My friends?" he said. "What happened to them?"

Her eyes were dumb.

"Friends? I know only of you."

She did, he thought grimly. There was no wiseness in her expression. She was dumb, living in a tiny world near his cot.

"But surely you saw them? You know what happened? Why don't you tell me what's happened?"

She shook her head. Alarm showed in her face.

"I know only of this place, and those who come here," she protested. "You must not question me. I will be punished."

Was it possible? Was it conceivable that a human, if she were human, had to spend her life in a single room?

"Look here," Casey said. "I've got to get out. I've got to find my friends."

She hunched down again at the side of the bed. She shook her head slowly.

"This place open only from outside. When Shindo's guards come, they take you to Cavern of Ra. You cannot go out until they come for you."

For a long time he waited quietly, not speaking again. Casey knew somehow that she spoke the truth. That he had been thrust in upon her and that she had cared for him carefully, nursing his wounded shoulder.

At last he tried again.

"Who is Shindo?"

She shook her head.

"What about the caverns of Ra? Ra means sun, doesn't it? Where are they? Why are they called—"

He halted abruptly. She was shaking her head no, steadily, convincingly.

"Okay," he said. "What's your name. Is that a secret also?"

A faint smile lighted the plain, wrinkled face.

"My name is Lano and I am of Shindo's staff," she said. "I have nursed many of Shindo's warriors back to health."

"I want to know more about Shindo. Where does he stay?"

He swore as she shook her head again. It was useless. To make her talk would mean trouble for both of them. She treated him gently. Casey had already come to overlook her ugliness and be thankful for the girl. It had been she who had brought him back to health, perhaps saved his life. He reached out and put his hand on top of her ugly head.

"Thanks," he said. "I won't bother you again."

She startled him by taking his hand in her own and kissing it quickly. Then she retreated to the far wall, sat down with her back to him and remained there. She would not look at him again. She was probably embarrassed.

The light that penetrated the wall grew warm and soothing. At last Casey managed to sleep. It was a long sleep, restful and without dreams.

RANGER YOUNG stared with disbelief at the creatures that entered the domed room. For the past four hours, by his wrist watch, he had been confined to the well-lighted prison, his only company being a fat, misshapen old crone like the one he had seen plunge to her death only a few hours before. He had tried, and failed, to get her to talk. He had sat on the edge of the single cot, waiting he knew not what for. Now, at least, he had something tangible to do. Something to keep him from going mad with inaction. The two men—for he supposed that was what they were—were hardly over four feet tall. Their bodies were wrinkled and overlayed with brown, rolling skin. Their eyes were expressionless, almost red in color, and deeply set in their sockets.

They carried between them a strange blanket-like cloth with a helmet attached to it. The cloth was black. The helmet was constructed of a transparent, glass-like stuff and shaped like the pointed end of an egg shell.

Reese watched them through narrowed eyes. It was plain to him that they weren't sure of their ground. They weren't acting as they had in the Devil's Kitchen. There they traveled like a wolf pack, gained courage from each other and overpowered him before he had an opportunity to fight back.

He stood up, his fists clenched. He watched them as they came closer. Then

he heard the old crone behind him speak.

"It will be useless to fight Shindo's men. Shindo will only send more of them. You will not be tortured—not for the present."

Somehow he gained strength from that voice. It was calm, almost pleasant. It wasn't in character with the wretch who spoke.

He felt relieved. From the first, he had felt that there was something not entirely evil in the woman who watched him. Her body was repulsive. Her voice and actions seemed almost in sympathy with him.

"I won't cause any trouble," he said.

Evidently the little men were able to understand him. They appeared grateful.

They whipped the garment over his shoulders so that the attached helmet came down neatly over his head. To Young's amazement, air seemed to penetrate the glass-like stuff. It smelled strangely sweet and pure, strained through the porous glass.

He looked down at his captors. One of them was motioning him toward the door to the dome room. Young felt like a condemned man walking that last mile. He took a deep breath and crossed his fingers under the robe. The robe was heavy about his shoulders and it clung closely to his body. It was heavy, as though metal had been woven into the fabric.

He stepped out of the room and his eyes widened in amazement. The world —Young's world—was gone.

HE FOUND himself in a massive cavern. The roof was so high that it was lost in ebony black, high above. Under his feet smoothly worn paths stretched away in many directions, and close to him on all sides were dozens of the egg-shaped cells like the one he had just left. An unpleasant swirling mist whirled him around and cold air pressed through the robe and chilled his body.

Out here it was cold, and a semi-twilight hung over the cavern. Yet, the cell had been warm and bright. Even now, light glowed from the dozens of cells near him. He wondered what the explanation could be. Some far-advanced form of illumination and heat? He swore under his breath. These gnomes were primeval, spawn of a horrible past. What would they know about advanced science?

The two misshapen little men were behind him. They prodded him gently, sending him along one of the trails that led beyond the group of cells. As he walked, he became aware of others, covered as he was with the all-enveloping robes, and being driven by other gnomes.

He tried to find out who they were, but either the distance was too great each time, or the mist swirled in hiding everything from him.

As Young walked, he tried to plan, to figure out some method of escape. It was a hopeless task, at least for the present. He assumed that Casey had been captured. He was fairly sure that Fred Stark and Walter Freedly were both down here. The group on the trail was quite large now. He knew that three hooded figures followed him down the trail that went deeper and deeper into the earth. There were two guards to each man. He guessed that Jim Casey, Freedly and Stark were behind him, just as bewildered about what was happening as he was.

Then the trail widened and Young had no more time to worry. Before him the sandy path changed to a hard-surfaced road. The cavern widened and the roof closed in until there was barely head room to pass. The roof, the walls,

the surface of the road under his feet were all black and smooth as polished ebony. A rush of warm air came up from below and the road slanted down. Not more than a hundred yards ahead, the road halted before two huge ivory gates. The gates were solid and the contrast between the glowing vibrant ivory and polished ebony was startling.

Before the ivory gates Young halted. He couldn't speak to those behind him. The helmet made communications impossible. He turned and stared back and the gnomes waited until the last group of three caught up. Then one of them opened the gates and called out in a loud voice.

"More prisoners for Shindo have arrived."

There followed a short period of complete silence.

"More," Young breathed silently to himself. "Then—perhaps the others are safe after all."

He stared with open-eyed amazement at the sight beyond the open gates.

Ra was a huge city, stretching away below him as far as he could see. The highway which they had followed ended abruptly at the edge of a high precipice on the other side of the gate. Over this precipice Young could see the huge vaulted dome of the underworld cavern. It glowed brightly, sending a steady powerful light for miles, to every corner of the place. On the floor of the cavern, thousands upon thousands of egg shaped cells spread out neatly as far as he could see. The cells were alike but there the plainness of the city ended.

Patterns, like colorful flower gardens, surrounded every cell. Broad highways traveled back and forth across Ra and on each side of these highways were more colorful gardens.

Young found himself unable to believe what he saw. Those millions of colorful flowers. The mile upon mile of carefully patterned designs were not flowers at all. They sparkled and shimmered under the light of the cavern roof.

What Young first thought were flowers, were, in actuality, millions of huge gems outdoing the rainbow in color and placed carefully in their setting to enhance the beauty of the underworld city. The city of ugly gnomes.

LINDA PALMER sat listlessly, almost hidden under the grand array of jeweled cloth that covered her body. She sat with both hands clutching the massive arms of the throne, her small feet together, head held high. Her eyes swept over the throng below, studying them carefully, trying desperately not to look frightened.

Linda Palmer—Queen of the Cavern of Ra.

She shuddered and an icy coldness swept through her.

"Queen of Ra," she said in a low whisper, and turned ever so slightly so that she could see the ugly dwarf, Shindo. Shindo was not looking at her and she sighed with relief. This was one of the few times when Shindo had forgotten her for an instant and was staring down from the high, richly ornate throne at the crowd milling in the hall below.

The hall was the throne cell of the kingdom and the egg-shaped dome lifted hundreds of feet above the city, its pastel walls glowing softly. The interior of the throne cell was not plain as were the other cells. From the foundation to the very top of the arch, the walls were filigreed with millions of sparkling varicolored jewels. The light caught every variation of color and made the throne cell a vast, sparkling rainbow of wealth. Each jewel shone magnificently in the setting.

Under that dome, a dwarf king beside her, Linda Palmer felt infinitely small and terribly afraid. She hadn't been so afraid since that first horrible night. The night when fear crept upon her subtly and burst into frenzy when strange men entered her room and snatched her away, had carried her to this underworld kingdom.

And today (she didn't know how many days had passed since she first came) she had been released from her prison cell and acclaimed Queen. It had happened abruptly and the ceremony was simple. Her place on the throne and the fine clothing that covered her slim body told the story. She shuddered. The most horrible part was yet to come. She had not yet greeted her King. That greeting would come later, when they were alone.

Something was afoot. Something that sent the men of Ra scurrying from the throne cell, only to return and talk excitedly among themselves. Something that made Shindo lean forward anxiously, staring at the big doors that led to the city beyond the throne cell.

The doors opened slowly and a wide path opened in the wall leaving a passage to the thrones. A strange procession entered. First, a figure well hidden under a strange black robe, his head enclosed in a glass helmet. Two gnomes prodded him forward toward the thrones and a second robed figure followed. Then a third came, and a fourth, each escorted by two gnomes. Linda Palmer didn't see the third man —or the fourth. There was something in the way the second man carried himself. Something about the spring of his walk. They were close now, and she could make out the features of the first. He was a stranger to her.

Then, roughly, the robes were jerked from their heads. Linda Palmer was watching the second man, her eyes wide, hands clutching tightly at the arms of the throne.

A cry escaped her lips as she sprang to her feet.

"Jim—Jim Casey!" She sank back, face drained of blood, realizing that it had been very foolish to betray her emotions. She was aware of the eyes that turned in her direction. King Shindo was staring balefully at her, his little red eyes bright with anger.

"Linda!" Casey's cry was filled with fear and love. To find her alive was wonderful. But—alive in such surroundings? He sprang forward seeing only the girl on the throne, knowing only that he must reach her.

Shindo waved his arm angrily.

THE gesture was all that was necessary. Gnomes swarmed around Jim Casey, slashing and beating him down with long staffs of wood. Linda Palmer took three steps toward the edge of the platform before Shindo, his head hardly reaching her shoulder, was at her side. His long bony fingers shot around her wrist and sank into the soft flesh. His voice was low and cruel.

"You forget that you are my property." His chin jutted forward angrily. "A queen does not run from her throne to mix with the slaves. But you will learn this soon."

She felt herself drawn back and dared not fight against him. When she turned to look into the crowd once more a large group had closed in tightly around Jim Casey. He was lying on the floor, arms placed protectively around his head. Tears sprang into the girl's eyes, but she didn't try to go to him again. Perhaps later, she could help him in a worth while manner.

Because the crowd had been excited by the action of their new queen, Shindo was forced to rise from his throne and quiet them with an upraised arm. Shindo

was a powerful man. His arms were brawny, hairy and long, like an ape's. His face, hawk-like in shape, was ugly, with a nose two sizes too large, eyes that cut through you like hot branding irons and a mouth that never smiled. When that mouth opened, which was seldom, there were no teeth in it—only purple gums.

"Take the prisoners to the chamber," Shindo shouted. "I will see them there."

The crowd was leaving, slowly, like a vast wave spreading out from the throne cell across the city to their various tasks. The prisoners were gone.

Linda Palmer looked at Shindo and he scowled back at her. She saw the brooding eyes, the horrible little body and the mouth that showed raw gums.

She shuddered and looked straight ahead again. Five minutes passed. When she took another peep at him, Shindo was gone. A few odd looking creatures moved back and forth through the throne room. A serving girl, gaunt and starving, brought a tray of fruit. Linda couldn't touch them. She had to help Jim somehow. She couldn't leave the throne. There were many eyes watching her. Eyes that would report every move she made.

She had betrayed herself this afternoon by crying out to Jim. She must not do it again, not until she was sure that she could be of some help. Meanwhile Shindo was her greatest problem. She had to avoid him and at the same time, not let him grow too angry at her.

THE chamber was about a hundred feet long, built like the tube of a subway and lighted from above, where long tubes sent out a glowing, pulsating light that warmed the entire room. Jim Casey was perspiring under the heavy robe. He looked around at the others. The heavy doors at the end of the room were locked tightly. There was no other furniture, with the exception of benches following the curve of the wall.

Puzzled, Casey sat down. He started to pull the robe up around him, but intense heat struck his shoe, penetrating to his feet. He dropped the robe again, swearing. Although his breath was steaming up the helmet, he was able to recognize Young, Stark and Freedly all dressed as he was. Evidently they had tried to disrobe as he had, and met with the same results.

He sat still, unable to talk with them through the thick glass, thankful that Linda was alive, and dreading what might happen before he could help her.

The doors at the far end of the room opened.

Shindo, the dwarf, stood alone just outside the room. As they watched, Shindo took a deep breath, stepped into the brightly lighted room and the doors clanged behind him.

Casey stood up slowly, his heart beating loudly against his chest.

"What the hell?" he muttered.

Before his eyes Shindo was growing.

"Welcome to Ra."

Casey wondered why he could hear Shindo's voice through the helmet. He had heard Linda easily this afternoon though he was unable to hear a sound from his companions. Probably some sort of radio device.

"You will later be able to communicate with me," Shindo said.

Casey continued to stare at him, wondering if his own eyes were seeing correctly. Shindo had grown a good ten inches since he first came in. The wrinkled face was smooth. The mouth looked less bitter. The unkempt hair was falling smoothly into place, curling against Shindo's neck.

"For the present," Shindo said, "you will be confined here in the Radium chamber. Be careful not to remove the robes. You would be destroyed in two

minutes. The tubes are powerful."

He was almost six feet tall now, and young in appearance. A smile widened his mouth, for he was obviously enjoying the impression he had made on them. Shindo was young now. Young, handsome and very strong in appearance.

He remained standing, stiffly alert, gazing first at one of them then the other of the small group near him.

"You wonder why you are here," he said. "Ra has existed for centuries, but because some of our science has not reached a successful conclusion and certain mistakes have been made, new blood is needed. No need to go into details now. Suffice to say, you and others like you are to be used for experimental purposes. Should we find that Ra can use you, other people from the surface will be brought here.

"Meanwhile, remain until we are ready for you. Remove the robes only if you wish to die."

Casey held his breath. Experiment? Shindo was apparently a strong, healthy warrior, under the power of the mysterious radium light beams.

Shindo had already turned away. He strode toward the door which opened from the outside. He passed through and waited patiently just outside. Even before the doors were closed, Casey could see the King of Ra start to shrink back into his old form. Down, down, the face growing dark and wrinkled. Then the door slammed and they were alone.

CASEY went toward Young. He stood with his helmet touching Reese's.

"Can you hear me?" he shouted.

Young nodded. Casey guessed that Young must be shouting also, but the voice that answered was far away, vibrating through the glass.

"We're in a hell of a mess."

Casey nodded.

"I don't think it could be much worse," he agreed.

Casey stared up at the cylindrical tubes that lighted the chamber. He leaned close to Young again.

"Good God, Young," he cried. "That radium burns when it touches you. Yet it cured that dwarf and made him as tall and straight as a God. *"Ra,* Young, *Ra.* Don't you get it?"

Young shook his head. Through the fogged helmet he looked puzzled.

"Ra is the symbol for Radium," Casey cried. "I've been on the wrong trail all the time. Sometimes the ancients referred to the Sun as Ra. I've been thinking of this place as the city of the Sun. It isn't. There's a fortune in radium in this one room."

He stopped, trying to catch his breath. Young didn't answer.

Casey sat down weakly. Here in a single chamber was enough radium to buy and sell an entire world.

He drew the robe down carefully over his shoes. God knew what might happen if it had a chance to affect his body.

The people of Ra might effectively prevent their escape by locking them in such a room, but thank God that they provided protection from the stuff. For a long time, Casey sat staring at the others. None of them tried to communicate again. There was a helplessness about their present position that defied any thought of escape. Later, perhaps, away from the radium room, they might have a chance. Casey thought of Linda. He knew that with her alive, there was still a chance for Fred Stark's friend, Miss Walker, and for Freedly's baby. He wondered. They had paid every respect to Linda, probably because of her beauty. Would they respect the old woman, Jenny Walker, or the baby?

JENNY WALKER swore softly under her breath. She started for the

twelfth time to find some way of escaping from the room. The room itself was simply constructed, and the wall had the shape and evidently the consistency of an egg shell. There, however, the comparison ended. It appeared a hopeless cause.

She had been here for hours. An old woman thrown into a prison, and left with an infant to care for. Jenny stopped in her careful search of the room and stared across at the baby. Baby Joe was quite content with the whole set-up. He had been well fed, though his stomach was beginning to rebel at the queer, almost blue milk supplied for him. However, the fairies, two rather ugly, but genuine products of fairyland, came in each afternoon and played with baby Joe. Otherwise, he was alone with a nice old lady who didn't look the least bit like mother, and who smiled at him very softly when she sat at his side.

Jenny Walker had a mental picture of every object in the room. She had stared at the long, useless table that occupied the center of the room, the single row of chairs near one wall (they seemed carved out of solid black rock), the cot, without benefit of springs, on which she slept, and a sort of down mattress that smelled like fresh hay. She knew that the makeshift crib for Joe had been cut out of half a barrel, and that the barrel looked like those she had seen stacked behind the hotel at Mammoth.

Jenny Walker sighed. What could she, an old lady, do to make the child safe? Now that the first shock of being snatched from her bed had passed, there remained in her little fear of what would happen to her. The old experience little fear if they have lived a good life. She *did* worry about the baby, for it was obvious to her that he also had been brought here from her world above. There wasn't anything she could do for him. She hoped that his mother wasn't too worried, but she knew that if baby Joe were her own child, she would go crazy with fear. All she could do was care for him with love.

KING SHINDO paced slowly up and down near his throne in the main cell. His haughty new-found queen had ignored him completely last night, and the gesture had hurt Shindo very deeply. He would never force his queen to accept his company and he smiled a little, wondering what she would say if she saw him after taking the radium treatment. He was tall and handsome under the Ra machines. He shrugged, aware of his black ugly face and small body.

The crowds were gathering in the hall below the thrones. His queen sat on her throne, face very pale, hands clasped. The thrones were covered with jeweled cloth, and Shindo's queen had been gowned fittingly in pure white, covered with tiny blue gems that reflected color for yards in every direction as though exploding bright lights continually shot from her body. Her hair was combed smoothly, without decoration, a natural crown of gold above the white robe.

The voices below the thrones died away and the entire cell waited, as though breaths were being held.

The doors opened opposite the thrones and two gnomes came in. Behind them walked the four men from earth, Young, Casey, Stark and Freedly. Their strange uniforms had been removed. They stayed close to each other, nervous, on guard.

Another door opened and two Ra women entered. One carried a baby boy. Walter Freedly shouted suddenly and tried to force his way forward, fighting to reach the baby.

"Joe—Joe . . ."

They forced Freedly back. At the

same time, Fred Stark saw Jenny Walker. Saw her alive, her figure upright, her lips pressed grimly together. A slow smile lighted his face as he saw the determination about her.

"They can't kill that old warrior," he said to himself.

Freedly was quiet now, and Young whispered to him.

"Take it easy. The baby's safe so far. Maybe we'll have a chance later, if you don't make a fool of yourself."

They all halted near the throne of Shindo and stared up at him. Casey couldn't take his eyes off Linda. He wondered if she really had the power to help them, or if she were but a figurehead, placed here for the pleasure of the ugly little king.

"I intend to be brief," Shindo leaned back on his throne, knees crossed. He didn't blink, and his red eyes stared first at one then the other of those below him. "We did not intend to steal more than a woman, a girl and a child from the surface. We wanted to take a bit of their blood, use some of their brain, and experiment with them until we were sure of how many surface people we would need. However, because six men came to us easily (two of them died before you others arrived), we are accepting your invitation and using you all."

No one dared to speak. Shindo smiled slightly.

"You wonder what nightmare brought you here. Let me tell you that you should feel honored to visit Ra. Ra existed long before the surface people left the trees and discarded their animal skins and flint axes. The people of Ra have grown in history as the fairies of Ireland, the gnomes of fairy tales, the folklore of old, old countries. That is because Ra people wander around on the surface at night, taking what they need and paying no heed to the surface people.

"Now you see that your fairy tales are true. That folklore is no idle tongue-woven gossip."

Shindo paused and looked rather sad. Then he shrugged.

"One thing troubles us greatly. Although we have a city that stretches far beyond your imagination—although we are so rich that riches bore us—although we are far advanced in many ways, living underground as we do, we have gradually lost the fine bodies that were ours when Ra was founded."

Low groans arose from among the people.

"We have been harmed greatly by coming in constant contact with the power of radium."

Jim Casey nudged Young. Young nodded gravely and listened.

"We have produced radium in such great quantities that one hundredth of one per cent of our present supply would make a million of your surface men rich beyond comparison. We were curing, building, heating and ironically enough, destroying with radium while the Curies still fumbled for its secret in France. While your hospitals guard a tiny capsule of it with their lives, our health buildings use it by the pound to produce light, heat and energy."

Shindo spoke in a slow, sincere voice. Though what he was saying was the truth, he had not yet come to the portion of his speech that troubled him greatly.

"Unfortunately, contacting radium as we have, we had overlooked some precautions. Because of this, and because we are confined underground, you see that we are not as straight and handsome as we might be.

"When in direct contact with radium, our bodies respond and become as they once were, tall and straight. When away from it, we resume our not entirely sat-

isfactory pose as your gnomes and goblins.

"It is our thought that by using blood and perhaps other vital portions of the human body, we can use your surface people to build ourselves once more into a clean-cut, handsome race of people."

He stopped and stared at Linda Palmer.

"My queen will be the first to offer her sacrifice, and what an honor it will be when from her body, she is able to give blood and strength to make Shindo a handsome king."

A shiver ran through Linda's body. She turned away, not daring to look at him. Shindo shrugged once more.

"That is all," his voice became hard, brutal. "Confine the prisoners in the cells at the laboratory. Work will start tomorrow."

IT WAS a queer way to talk, but to the four men confined in the radium room, it was the only way. They had been returned to their prison, Casey, Young, Freedly and Stark and were protected from the radium once more by the gowns and helmets.

Ironically, the very garments meant to protect them, gave them no chance to escape. They could talk only by sitting very close to each other, and relaying each sentence to the last man in the group. Young talked with Jim Casey, his helmet pressed to Casey's.

"They don't seem to have weapons. They rely on their superior numbers to keep us here."

Casey nodded. "And the radium," he said. "Outside of these suits, we'd be destroyed in a second. Still, we can't escape from this room as long as we wear the damned things."

He felt a tug on his arms and turned to see Stark staring at him through the mist of the helmet. He leaned toward Stark and relayed what had been said. Stark nodded and passed the words on to Freedly. Freedly stood up and paced up and down the room. Casey followed him, and they stood near the end of the cell staring at the crack where the double doors came together. There was nothing to hold, nothing to use to pry them apart. They turned and looked back at the others. Young shook his head and motioned for Casey to return.

"It's no use. The light is as bright as ever. I think we should get some sleep. We may have a chance when they take us out of here."

Casey agreed. No use facing the death ray of the radium tubes. He stretched out on the bench and turned away from the light. He closed his eyes and tried to sleep.

Casey awakened suddenly, feeling that someone was pushing against him. He turned over and saw Fred Stark motioning wildly toward the door. Casey sprang to his feet. The door was open. Beyond it, on the floor, two of Shindo's gnomes lay stretched out full length. Then Casey saw why.

A broken helmet lay beside one of the guards. He turned to Stark and saw that Stark was grinning. Stark had discarded his robe and helmet. His face was already burned and scarred. His hands shook.

"You—you damned fool," Casey choked. He was glad that Stark could hear. Stark cried out and he could just hear the man's voice.

"I'm an old man. Get the others and get out. Save the girl and the baby." He saw tears streaming down Stark's face. "Save Jenny if you can. Tell her I—"

Stark pitched forward on the floor. Young and Freedly were already up. They dragged Stark from the room. Quickly they discarded the robes. One of the gnomes started to groan. Casey brought his helmet down on the crea-

ture's head and watched foul, dark blood ooze from the wound. He felt better, free and able to fight back. He turn to see Young arise slowly from Stark's quiet form. Young looked at Casey and shook his head.

"He must have worked on these doors for quite a while. Shindo didn't think we'd dare discard the robes."

Stark was dead. His face was brown and covered with red streaks. His fingers were stiff.

Freedly stood up. He was crying, and he made no gesture to hide his tears.

"He did it for the baby, and for the woman," he said.

Young looked along the corridor. It was deserted. At the far end, there was only darkness.

He took Freedly's arm.

"They can't harm him any more," he said.

Together, the men went along the passageway.

LINDA PALMER awakened sometime after two o'clock in the morning. She hadn't meant to sleep. Hadn't thought that even in the great downy bed she could be lulled into false security. She slipped out of bed and put on the warm, jeweled robe and low slippers that had been left for her. The room opened onto a wide balcony and below was the entire world of Ra.

Linda Palmer admitted to herself that this was a magnificent world. A world that displayed riches impossible to attain on the surface of the earth.

The robe was comfortable and she wandered toward the balcony. Near the open door, a vase of flowers occupied the table. The flowers were false, with twigs of wire and blossoms of glued diamonds. She emptied the vase and grasped it by the narrow neck. At least, should she meet anyone on the balcony, she would not be entirely unarmed.

The balcony was deserted. She went to the wide stone rail and leaned over it, staring down into the courtyard.

She could see skinny shadowy little figures, walking back and forth across the wide yard. High walls separated Shindo's palace from Ra. Walls that she at first hoped to escape over. She shuddered. That was before Jim Casey had come. Now she had to help him. Had to do something before morning.

For a long time she watched. About to return to her room, Linda saw a shadow creeping along the wall directly below her. At first she backed away from the rail, afraid something—someone had seen her. Then she noticed a strange thing. It seemed like a tall man. There were no tall men here. She watched carefully, as the man emerged into the half-light of the courtyard. He looked around, then turned and motioned for someone to follow him.

She couldn't mistake that motion.

She held her breath. The man below her was Jim Casey. She wanted to cry out to warn him that guards were all about her. She couldn't. Three other men attached themselves to the shadow and moved slowly toward the gate.

She heard footsteps near her, and turning, saw the dwarf Shindo come toward the rail. He hadn't seen her. She stood very still. Shindo wasn't over ten feet away and he held a long, narrow tube in his hand. Now he had see Jim Casey. He tensed, leaning over the balcony rail. The tube in his hand was aimed.

An animal hatred arose in the girl. Her throat was dry. She held the vase firmly in one hand and moved toward Shindo. The tube clicked in his hand. Linda Palmer screamed her warning and sprang at the same time. A slim, white light burst from the end of the tube and shot downward. She heard Jim Casey's shout of warning, and at

once the courtyard was wild with sound.

The vase poised in midair and shot toward Shindo's head. He fell silently and she heard his skull crush against the stone floor.

She didn't know what power the tube had, but she knew it was a weapon. A weapon he had meant to use on the men below.

It clattered to the stones and she scooped it up. Panting with fright she leaned over the balcony once more. Shindo's guards were closing in on the men below. She pointed the tube at them and pressed the button on its side.

Magically the guards melted away from the group of surface men. They cried out as the ray hit them.

"Jim," she cried. She was comforted to hear him call her name. He was alive. "Come up the steps to the right. I'll meet you in the hall. Hurry, while I can still hold them."

She saw them break and run toward the stairs that led to the balcony. More figures came into the yard and she fought them off, sending that killing, burning beam of light in a wide circle, watching them scream and fall. She felt sick inside.

Then suddenly the beam of light was gone and the tube was dead, like a flashlight without batteries. She started to back away, slipped and fell over something. Shindo's body.

She tried to get up but she had twisted a muscle in her ankle and couldn't stand. She threw the tube away from her and started to sob.

Then the darkness of the balcony grew dense and the pain left her. She fainted.

"SHE'S coming around. Better hold your hand over her mouth until she realizes who it is."

She felt a hand on her lips but was relieved. It wasn't a deformed hand. The fingers felt straight and warm.

She nodded her head, opening her eyes to stare up at Jim Casey.

"Don't make a sound," he cautioned. "We're in a tight spot."

She nodded again to show that she understood and he removed his hand. She turned to look at the others. They were in her room. Casey had brought two of the other men she had seen with him this afternoon. The third one was missing. She wondered if he had been killed in the courtyard.

"You did a good job on Shindo," Casey said.

She shuddered.

"Dead?"

He nodded and smiled.

"Good riddance," he said briefly. "They are searching the whole palace. The door of this room is locked and for some reason they haven't dared to come in. Maybe because you're the queen. If they do enter your room, they'll find Shindo in your bed."

She quivered again.

"Jim—they'll kill the old lady and the baby if they don't find us."

He pressed her hand.

"I know," he said simply. "Linda, this is Frank Young, a Ranger from the park, and this is Walter Freedly—the baby's father."

Now she understood the look of anguish in Freedly's eyes.

She held out her hand.

"I—I think the baby's all right," she said. "If we can just reach him before."

Reese stood up.

"It's time we tried to do that," he said. "They haven't searched the room yet. I think I have an idea."

Jim Casey said:

"Anything is better than waiting. Let's do something about finding the others."

Shindo lay on the bed, blanket about

his chin, looking very small and strangely peaceful.

"I think Shindo can get the baby for us," Young said.

They stared at him.

"Shindo?" Linda said. "But . . . ?"

Young nodded.

"There must be a hundred of them in the courtyard now," he said. "Shindo is going to give them a speech from the balcony."

Freedly went to the balcony. He stared down at the torches that lighted the yard. He came back, deep anger in his voice.

"The courtyard is crowded," he said.

"Good."

Young turned to Casey.

"Help me with Shindo. We'll hold him up between us."

The strange body of the gnome looked shorter than ever between them. They held him upright, letting his legs trail behind him holding him so that his head and shoulders were visible over the wall. Young shouted.

"Here is your king."

A silence settled over the mob below. Queer, frightened faces stared up at them.

"Your king is ill," Young shouted. "He demands that you bring the baby and the old woman here to his room. He wants to speak to them."

Cries came from the crowd. Angry, unbelieving cries. Young turned, seeing Linda in the door, her hand in Freedly's arm.

"It isn't going to work," he said. "You'd better make a run for it."

To his amazement a smile lighted Freedly's face. He moved from Linda and came toward them. Then, a roar of anger broke, seemingly from Shindo's dead lips.

"Fools, can't you understand Shindo's orders? Must I come down and have you flogged."

The voice was so real that Casey almost let go of the body. Young's lips worked in amazement. He knew who had spoken. *Freedly hadn't told them he was a ventriloquist.*

The voice was like magic. Gnomes turned and started to move away.

"Bring the baby and the woman to this room at once," Shindo said. "I wish to speak to them."

THE huge chamber above the balcony was a strange sight. Young realizing the importance of showmanship, had arranged Shindo carefully in bed, eyes open, one arm lying carelessly over his chest. They all gathered around the bed in a worried little group. Hardly three minutes had passed since they left the balcony. Footsteps sounded in the hall and someone knocked on the door. Young signaled Casey to answer it. Casey took a last look at Linda, then grinned at Jim Freedly.

"It's up to you now," he said. "Make it a good show."

Freedly's face was grim.

"I will."

Casey reached the door and opened it. Jenny Walker came in first. Her gray eyes searched the room for someone, and if Fred Stark's absence puzzled her she didn't betray it. In her arms, cooing and evidently none the worse for his adventures, was baby Joe Freedly.

Four gnomes walked behind the pair. They were armed with the radium rods and their faces mirrored deep suspicion.

A voice came from the bed. Evidently the voice of Shindo.

"I have asked you to bring the surface people here. Three of them escaped from the radium chamber. The fourth man was killed while trying to accompany them."

A gasp of horror came from Jenny Walker's lips. Her face went white as

the blood fled from her cheeks. Her lips tightened. She made no effort to express herself.

Freedly was clever. Never faltering, never moving his lips, he caused the corpse of Shindo to go on speaking.

"Because these surface people have courage, I am determined to let them go free."

One of the gnomes sprang forward. Anger was etched deeply into his wrinkled face.

"But two bodies, the remains of those who came first, have been used in the laboratory. Surely with the promise of success they have given us you will not toss away such valuable material."

Shindo's voice arose in wrath.

"Silence," he shouted.

The gnome backed away. They were all bewildered. What could account for so strange a change in their king?

"The blood of the first surface man has been injected into the men of Ra," the gnome went on timidly. "Already they show signs of growing taller and straighter. We believe that if they remain away from the radium mines, they will look as ordinary surface people do."

"That is not enough," Shindo said. "It would take a surface man for every man of Ra. The slaughter would be great. The result—questionable."

The four gnomes were angry now. They whispered for a moment among themselves. The spokesman addressed the dead king.

"You have never halted at the thought of slaughter before," he said. "You have been a powerful king."

"That is enough," Shindo cried. "I am still leader."

Perhaps the king's body had not been balanced carefully on the bed. Perhaps fate caused his arm to slip suddenly and fall limply to his side. The room was electric with silence. Young, Casey, even Freedly on the far side of the bed, were suddenly tense with fear.

The spokesman for the gnomes sprang forward. His hand touched the king's forehead. It came slowly away. He turned, facing the group of surface people, his eyes narrowed to slits.

"Shindo is dead," he said.

IF FREEDLY had lost his head then, if he had forgotten the part he played, they might never have left the room alive. Instead, he spoke in Shindo's heavy sarcastic voice.

"Cannot a dead king remain the ruler of his people?"

The gnome stood very still, staring first at Young, then back at his companions by the door. He backed toward them, extreme bewilderment mirrored on his face.

"A dead king talks!" he said.

Seemingly the scheme had worked.

Shindo's voice came once more.

"Summon guides and send these surface people to safety."

The gnome turned suddenly.

"It is not true," he screamed. "The king is dead and cannot talk. It is a trick."

He lifted the radium rod and aimed it straight at Freedly's head. At the same instant, Jenny Walker dropped the baby and threw herself directly into the path of the weapon. A white ray of light shot directly into her face. With a groan, she sank to the floor. She didn't move again.

Young was close to the spokesman of the gnomes. He grasped the rod and swung around, spraying the three men at the door. One of them managed to bring his radium rod into action, but before he could aim, Jim Casey was upon him, hitting the thing with his arm. The rod flew through the air. Casey swung hard. The gnome fell cracking his skull against the wall. The other three were already dead, killed by the radium rod

in Young's hand.

Casey turned. Linda Palmer was on her knees at Jenny Walker's side. Linda was crying.

"You can't help her now," Reese said. "We've got to get out of here. Freedly, take one of the rods. Linda, carry the baby. We may be able to fight our way through."

They ran down a long hall toward the stairs that led to the courtyard. There were still a few gnomes milling about restlessly below the balcony.

Young stopped at the head of the stairs.

"It's a good hundred yards from the bottom of these stairs to the gate," he said grimly. "Hide the rods in your sleeves. We'll try to walk out of here as though we had permission to do it. If they start anything, run as fast as you can and keep the girl and the baby between us. *We're going out.*"

Half way across the court, Young stopped short. He turned and faced several ugly little men who were closing in slowly.

"King Shindo is dead," he said calmly. "You must go to his chamber at once."

Perhaps it was the shock of what he said. Perhaps these little people were accustomed to receiving and obeying orders. They turned and ran past him toward the stairs. Some of them were moaning aloud. Others moved up the stairs toward the chamber where the body of the king was waiting.

"So far, so good," Young said. He pushed at the huge gate and felt them open outward under the weight of his body.

THE gates were closed behind them. Two giant rings hung from the outside.

"Casey," Young said, "you try to find something to push through the rings. We've got to lock them in for a short time. We need every second."

Linda watched Jim Casey hurry along the wall toward a pile of metal rods. She held the baby tightly, wondering how they had come so far without being challenged. There was only one explanation. Shindo was a powerful man. Almost a God to these underworld gnomes. The news of his death had been all important at the moment. As soon as they realized what had happened, the entire population of Ra would be on their trail.

Young said, "We need every second."

It seemed to Linda that they needed much more than that. She stood still, staring down the long streets of Ra toward the cliff that led upward to safety. Jim Casey came back carrying a heavy metal bar. He and Young slipped it through the rings on the gate. Now those inside would have to scale the wall to get out. That would save time.

Evidently the city had not been alarmed. The castle gate was half hidden from the street by a solid egg structure that came almost to the walls. Young thought it time to hold a council of war.

"We've got to get to the cliff," he said hurriedly. "They brought us down in some sort of an elevator. We'll have to overpower the guards and go up the same way. It's a long chance. Perhaps some of us should go ahead and clear the way."

He hesitated, looking at Linda with the baby in her arms.

The girl felt color rise to her cheeks. He was suggesting that she wasn't strong enough to face the coming flight.

"We'll stick together," she said firmly.

Walter Freedly took baby Joe from her.

"Good," Young said. "Let's go."

They walked quietly out into the

street and along it toward the distant cliff. People of Ra were wandering about. The squat, ugly gnomes stopped to stare, yet did nothing to stop them.

The streets were straight and the edges of the walks were lined with jewel-studded rocks that shone and glittered in the sun. Young stayed ahead, his hand clasped around the rod that was hidden in his coat sleeve. Linda came next and then Freedly holding the baby firmly. Jim Casey walked beside Freedly, trying to look as though he did this sort of thing every day in the week.

They had covered a distance of about six blocks and now a crowd of tiny gnomes were on their trail, probably ugly children spawned by the gnomes of Ra. The commotion around them grew louder. Young, alarmed to see that they had a long distance to go, spoke over his shoulder in a low voice.

"We'll meet someone with some authority pretty soon." He didn't sound very happy about it. "Get ready to fight."

"Save as much of the rod's power as you can," Linda said. "The strength of the radium doesn't last long."

She had hardly spoken when the clear melodious sound of bells came from somewhere behind them. The group stopped to listen.

"They're ringing the castle bells," Young said.

They continued to walk, increasing their speed. The bells went on ringing. The band of urchins behind them stopped. Men appeared on the street, their heads tipped sidewise, listening as the bells tolled on each note different than the last.

"Good God," Casey said. "I think that ringing is some sort of a signal. Watch the crowd. It seems to be getting a message."

It was true. And as they listened, they looked first horror-stricken and then angry.

Young reached a small alley between two buildings.

"We'll have to run for it," he said. "Follow me."

He disappeared down the dark alley and the others followed, breaking into a swift run. They had left the street just in time. A shout of anger came from behind them.

FORTUNATELY, Ra seemed to have a network of narrow alleys that criss-crossed behind the main streets. Young dived into the first one that seemed to lead in the direction of the cliff. The others followed. Linda, now that the worst had come, felt herself breathing easily and following Young's swift pace with comparative ease. Freedly was having a harder time of it. The baby was heavy and she could hear him panting behind her.

They followed a dark straight path that led toward the cliff.

"Keep a look-out behind," Young cried. "If they show themselves, let them have it."

Casey grunted his reply. He was saving his wind.

A blurred mass of tousled heads appeared in an opening ahead of Reese. He yanked the radium rod from his sleeve and pressed the button. The heads disappeared, but they were forced to climb over the half dozen corpses that the rod had left scattered in the alley.

The cliffs were close now. They rose, black and forbidding, from the floor of the cavern. At the end of the alley which they now reached, an open square separated the buildings from the cliff. Against the cliff wall was a small single-doored building. From the top of the house, a series of wire screens traveled up the face of the cliff toward the road above. This was evidently the elevator

lift.

Young waited only a minute as they reached the square. Gnomes were gathering there, hundreds of them. Fortunately only the guards of Ra seemed to be armed. However, even without weapons, the mob was a tangle of human flesh through which they must cut their way. Cries of hatred drowned Young's voice. He pointed across the square and lifted his radium rod. Freedly and Casey were at his side, forming a triangle of death.

They started across at a swift run and Linda almost in their center drew her own weapon.

"Keep your fire concentrated, straight ahead of us," Young shouted.

The radium rods tore a gash through the mob. Corpses piled up until Linda knew that she would fall with them if the trip through them lasted much longer. She heard a low growl behind her and turned to see a wicked, muscle-bound little fellow about to dive at her. She turned the rod on him and watched blood spout from the wound in his head and burn to a brown ugly ooze. They went on.

They entered the elevator-control house and Young slammed the door behind him.

An open elevator covered with wire mesh was straight ahead. Young waited until he and the others were inside. Casey was looking for a control mechanism. He found a long lever mounted on the side of the cage. After looking at it a while he saw how it worked.

Young dragged Linda into the cage and slammed the door. It was like staring out of a cage at a vast horde of monkeys. The Ra people clung to the screen, gibbering and shouting.

Casey grasped the lever and pulled it full around. For an instant the elevator seemed poised and motionless. Then a roar of power surged from somewhere and the car shot upward.

The city of Ra spread out below, looking as peaceful as it had the first time they saw it.

The car zoomed faster and Casey drew the lever back until they were slowing down near the top of the cliff.

"Be ready to fight your way out," Young said.

The warning was unnecessary. The car reached a platform at the top of the cliff and halted. Casey's radium rod flashed a white fire across the smooth top of the cliff and three Ra men screamed and fell to the smooth floor. They were out of the cage now and racing madly along the black glistening road.

Ahead, in the dimness of the cave, they saw the luminous domes of the egg prisons in which they had first been confined.

THEY had outdistanced their pursuers at least for the present. With the egg-shaped cells ahead and certain that escape was near, a new problem presented itself.

"How will we find the entrance into Devil's Kitchen?" Young asked suddenly. "The walls of the cave all look alike. How are we going to get out?"

Jim Casey had been deep in thought since they first started to follow the escape route from Ra. He remembered a Ra girl named Lano who had cared for him when he first came along this trail. Casey had the impression that the women in these cells were a class apart from the population of the valley. That they lived as nurses, perhaps as nuns of a sort, staying by themselves and earning the respect of Shindo's people.

"I have a plan," he said. "It's very apt not to work, and yet—" He paused thoughtfully. "No harm in trying."

They reached the cells and were running among them toward the far end of

the cave.

Casey stopped. He stood quietly for a minute, listening. The others waited, wondering.

"Lano," he called suddenly. *"Lano —help us. We need you."*

The cave echoed and re-echoed with the call. Within the cells all was silent. He wondered if they were still here, the odd ugly healers of men.

"Lano!"

His cry was louder this time, almost pleading. She was their last hope.

"Wait," Young said in a low voice. "Is that you, Lano?"

Casey wheeled around to face a cell near the end of the cave. She was there, shuffling out of the tiny door, hobbling toward him. Lano of the ugly face and crippled body. Her eyes shone eagerly and a twisted smile lighted her face.

Linda Palmer stared first at the woman and then at Jim Casey.

"Jim," she said in an awed voice. "If I ever saw worship in a woman's eyes I see it now."

Casey felt queer about it. Felt as though he was demanding a favor that he could never return. There was more than duty in this. It was as though he were a God, a thing apart, the center of Lano's very existence. She approached timidly and stood near him, staring straight into his eyes.

"You were here before, and you have returned." Her voice was filled with wonder. "You called me?"

He steeled himself against the ugly girl and tried only to think of her gentle voice, her quiet loyalty.

"We have come from Ra," he said. "Now we wish to return to the surface."

She bowed her head.

"I am sorry," she said. "It is Shindo's wish that no surface people return to their homes."

The baby started crying in Freedly's arms. Linda held her breath, wondering how Jim would handle the woman of the cave.

"You are frightened of Shindo," Casey said, and managed a smile. "You do not obey him because of love."

He was only guessing, stalling for time.

"Fear is greater than love," Lano said. "It breeds death to those who show disloyalty to Ra."

Casey moved forward until he was close to her.

"Shindo is dead," he said in a low voice.

THE expression on the girl's face changed abruptly. The shoulders straightened and her hands sought her flat chest.

"Dead? Shindo is dead?"

Casey nodded.

"The people of Ra are after us," he said. "They will murder us."

Lano remained silent, but a great weight of fear seemed to lift from her body.

"The people of Ra never loved Shindo," she said firmly. "They only obey him. It was Shindo's plan to steal surface people. We would have nothing to do with the surface. We would live here in peace, as we have these many centuries."

It was Jim Casey's chance.

"Then show us how to get out of the cavern," he pleaded. "We will tell no one about Ra. We will never mention it, even among ourselves. I give you my word, Lano."

Lano turned quickly and started to run toward the wall of the cave.

"Follow," she said. "The Ra people must not suspect."

Casey scooped Linda into his arms and Young demanded that Freedly give up the child. They followed the girl to a narrow place in the tunnel. She knelt and pulled a boulder away from a cleft

in the floor. On her stomach now, she reached far down into the crevice and pressed a hidden mechanism. The wall thundered in protest and started to split apart.

On the road that led from Ra, many voices were raised in an angry cry. The opening was large enough to crawl through now. Lano arose.

"Quickly," she said. "The trail must be closed when they come."

Young went first, and Freedly followed. Casey put Linda down gently. He stared at Lano. Lano's eyes were on Linda Palmer.

"I—don't know how to thank you," Casey said.

Lano seemed not to hear. She spoke directly to Linda.

"You are his mate?"

Linda blushed.

"I—I am," she said quietly. "I love him very much."

"Then treasure him," Lano said, "for in Ra he would be a God."

She pushed Linda quickly through the hole in the wall.

Casey stood there, wondering what to do next, looking for a last time at the girl who had saved their lives.

"Will you be safe?" he asked.

She nodded.

"The Ra people do not disturb us if we leave them alone," she said. "Hurry or they will suspect me."

Casey turned and followed Linda. She had waited for him in the darkness of Devil's Kitchen. They watched the rock close behind them. Lano and the world of Ra were gone. The world above was a bright world of the future. Then, before he carried the girl up to light and life once more, Jim Casey took her in his arms. It was as simple as that. What they had come through together made words unnecessary.

SCIENCE
REVOLUTIONIZES THE FARM

RECENT developments of fact indicate that in the not distant future the aim of crop regulation will be, not to curtail production, but to increase it to meet the growing demands of industry for the organic things that grow from the soil.

For example, cotton seed, now a vital material in many products was considered a waste product before the Civil War. Cotton-seed oil goes into soaps, candles, cooking and other uses which are part of our everyday necessities of life.

Cotton linters, another farm waste, is now an initial material in the manufacture of rayon and in coated fabrics that go into handbags, wall coverings, and automobile upholstery.

Billiard and golf balls, hairbrushes and combs, electric insulators, photographic films, and the unseen binder in safety glass, all contribute to the cotton farmer.

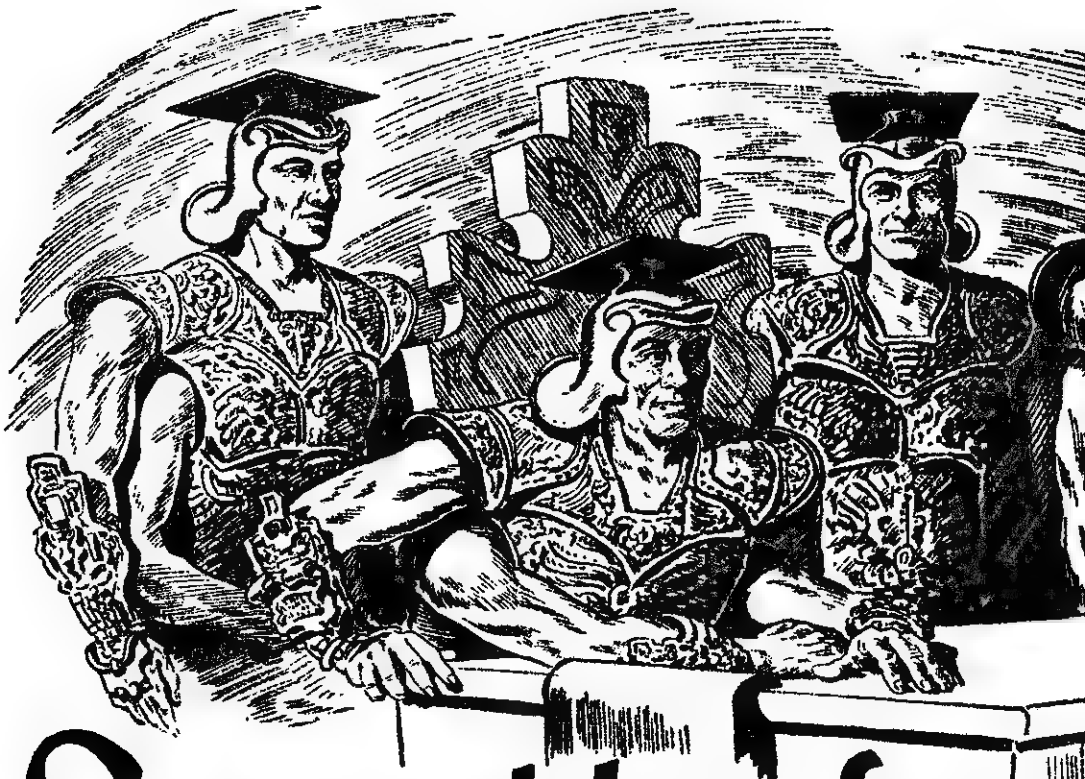
Yet, more than a hundred commercial uses have been developed by the chemists for corn. These developments range from glycerine used in our present day explosives to carbon dioxide used in making "dry ice." Wheat straw is being made into corrugated paper boxes, though corrugated and paper boxes are rather difficult to get since these articles are now serving Uncle Sam.

The development of a new outlet for cotton in road building, which forecasts an annual demand of from two or three million bales, was recently announced at Peabody University. An eminent scientist has suggested that the day may not be so far off when the farm will grow the bulk of our fuels, replacing coal and oil.

Previous to Uncle Sam entering into the present war, a new type of farmer was seen moving onto our farms . . . college trained, and fully alive to the difficulties inherent in his job. He was not wedded to tradition, on the contrary he was itching to blaze new trails as did Boone.

This new agriculture may be very different from the agriculture we have known. The crops of today may not be those of tomorrow. For instance, sugar that is said to be far superior to cane and beet sugar can be produced from the common dahlia, and the readily grown Jerusalem artichoke.

What is now a common weed may be tomorrow's wheat crop. Initial phases of the processing of certain farm products that go into manufacturing may be transferred to the farm and may mechanize it beyond our dreams.—*Ava Brown.*



Something for Herbert

By **FRANCES M. DEEGAN**

ONLY the quick wit of Aunt Agatha stood between these lords of outer space and Earth's perfect child who was in her care

THE whole thing was a deliberate plot, and Miss Agatha Stillwater knew it. She stared indignantly at her niece, and Marie smiled back at her innocently. She frowned at her niece's husband, and John Banning set down his coffee cup.

"Of course it's a responsibility, Aunt Aggie," he said, looking very young and serious. "And we wouldn't think of asking you to do it, except in an emergency like this. You said yourself it would be foolish to keep a maid on my salary—"

"I still say it," snapped Agatha, drawing her thin frame stiffly upright. "But if you feel that you are obligated to go to this silly reception of your em-

Aunt Aggie's arms folded tighter about the child and her eyes blazed defiance

ployer's, you might at least have made some arrangement to get somebody in for one evening."

"We tried, Aunt Aggie," said Marie gently. "There simply isn't any one. At least, not any one I'd trust."

"So that's why you got me out here to dinner! You knew very well you weren't going to get anybody else to come in and act as nursemaid. You might have told me what your motive was, instead of being so sly about it."

"But, Aunt Aggie," Marie murmured, "I couldn't explain it all over the telephone, and—"

"And if you had," said her Aunt Aggie, "I would not have let myself be persuaded to undertake any such responsibility. If anything happens—"

"You won't have any trouble at all," said John. "Nothing will happen. Herbert is the best kid in the world, and Marie has written out all the instructions in case he wakes up. Honestly, Aunt Aggie, he's fun when you get to know him."

"I realize perfectly well what you have in mind," said Aunt Aggie stiffly. "You think that by dumping him in my lap and leaving me alone with him, we'll become attached to each other and then I'll be willing to finance the next one. After all that revolting publicity! You have made a public spectacle of yourselves, and I certainly don't intend to become a part of it."

"The publicity wasn't so bad," said John soberly, "considering what we got out of it. The contest for the Perfect Mother made a swell advertising campaign for Lily White soap, and it got me a job with one of the biggest advertising agencies in the country. By winning the five thousand dollar first prize, Marie was able to finance Herbert in style, whereas up to that time we hadn't even been sure we could afford to keep him after we got him. And it's no small honor to be known as the Perfect Mother."

"Perfect Mother!" sniffed Aunt Aggie. "Perfect outrage! And now it's starting all over again. How do you suppose I felt when I picked up the newspaper and saw the headline: PERFECT MOTHER EXPECTS ANOTHER. It's indecent! And until she met you, Marie had always led such a genteel life. I disapproved of your marriage when she eloped with you, and everything that has happened since has proven that I was right. If Marie had remained with me as I had planned, she might one day have inherited the Stillwater estate. But you can't expect me to fritter away the money helping you raise a family to comfort your old age, when you have deprived me of my only companion and relative at my time of life."

John's brows drew down threateningly, and Marie said hastily: "That's why it's so important for us to attend the reception, Aunt Aggie. We simply can't afford to snub the boss, you know."

"Very well," said Aunt Aggie, folding her napkin with nice precision. "Never let it be said that I failed to do my duty. But this will not happen again, I assure you."

AUNT AGGIE sat rigidly in the living room of the small Banning cottage and stared at page 14 of a slim book entitled "How to Have a Baby." She had read the same sentence five times. The whole thing was very confusing. Perhaps, she concluded, it was because she was unable to concentrate. Her attention was elsewhere. All her faculties were centered on the nursery at the back of the cottage. She jumped at every slightest sound, and listened fearfully for its repetition.

Every few minutes she rose from her

chair cautiously and tiptoed to the door of the nursery. The dim night light revealed Herbert peacefully sleeping on his stomach, his plump arms and legs sprawled at impossible angles.

Aunt Aggie settled herself firmly in her chair and started once more on page 14. The stillness was shattered by a nerve-wracking squawl. Aunt Aggie leaped from her chair and stood in the middle of the living room, trembling.

The squawl was repeated and went on from there into hideous wails, interspersed with gasps and angry snarls. Aunt Aggie ran toward the nursery with agitated tripping steps. Herbert had flopped over on his back and was waving his arms and legs frantically to accompany the sound effects.

Steeling herself, Aunt Aggie went to his bed, reached over the railing and lifted him awkwardly. The worst had happened. Herbert was all wet.

Aunt Aggie put him back hastily and began a nervous search for the paper on which Marie had carefully set down the instructions. Herbert's noise increased to a miniature roar, but the paper was nowhere to be found.

Her mouth set in a grim line, and shoulders squared, Aunt Aggie once more approached the crib. "After all," she said. "I'm a woman."

The operation lasted nearly thirty minutes. There were too many pins and not enough corners. The finished result might not have been approved by the author of "How to Have a Baby," but Herbert was satisfied, and that seemed to be the main object. He made friendly noises and held up his arms.

Aunt Aggie folded the blue blanket about him, lifted him gingerly and stepped carefully across the nursery to his crib. That, however, was contrary to Herbert's wishes. He clung to her with an amazing grip, and protested vehemently. It was impossible to put him down. She couldn't remove either of her hands from his person to unfasten his grip. She looked around the nursery for some mechanism to pry him loose and spied the small rocking chair. That was undoubtedly the solution.

Holding the soft, squirming body tightly, Aunt Aggie backed carefully into the rocker and set it in motion. Herbert's grunting activity subsided as they moved backward and forward with exact precision. Aunt Aggie looked at the nursery clock. It was three minutes past nine, and she wondered if it was bad for Herbert to be awake at this hour. The rocking chair continued its restful motion and Herbert crooned and gurgled softly.

"My conscience!" thought Aunt Aggie. "He's singing himself to sleep!"

AUNT AGGIE'S ears were ringing with the sensation of a great rushing roar. She opened her eyes to an all-pervading glow that seemed to come from everywhere and cast no shadows. Slowly she became aware that Herbert was still in her arms, that they were in a vast room bathed in the strange light, and that they were not alone.

In front of her was a huge, flat desk that appeared to be made of jade. Behind the desk was a throne-like chair to match. Drawn up at a respectful distance on either side of the desk were . . . creatures. The strangest creatures Aunt Aggie had ever dreamed of, even in nightmares.

They wore draped robes of a pale, neutral gray, and gray metal caps resembling the mortar boards worn by graduating college students, except that these were octagonal in shape. They looked like humans, stood like humans, but they all appeared to have

four arms. That was impossible, of course, but . . .

A great square section of the glowing wall in back of the desk slid noiselessly aside, and a magnificent individual stepped through. His robe was flaming red. He wore a tall crown of gleaming, silver-like metal. And he had six arms!

Aunt Aggie's mind was now fully awake, and she became aware of several things at once. She was completely relaxed, she felt no fear, and Herbert was not the least bit heavy in her arms. She looked down at him and his round blue eyes were open, staring upward placidly.

The red-robed being seated himself gracefully in the jade chair, and from somewhere behind her a squat, three-armed creature appeared. The head was shaved, the features oriental, but the skin was dead white. It appeared to be a normal male, except for the extra arm on the left side. The third arm was somewhat smaller than the other two and grew out of the flesh just below the natural arm. Aunt Aggie looked at it carefully. There could be no doubt about it. This creature wore a short robe of dull red and the arms were bare. Two stocky legs, she noted, and the feet were encased in soft red slippers.

The creature held out an odd object. It looked like an inverted pear with a short jade handle. The pear itself was a softly glowing red substance. Aunt Aggie lowered Herbert to her lap and took the object in her left hand. At once a voice was speaking in sharp tones.

"This?" it said indignantly. "This is the Perfect Mother? Have we undertaken such an expedition to bring back this? We have been tricked! It is as I feared. The Earth people are more clever than we thought. They have learned of our plans by some secret means. That campaign for the Perfect Mother was a trap!"

Aunt Aggie noted that each of the gray-robed figures, as well as the six-armed leader, held a glowing red pear similar to hers. It was the leader speaking. When he paused a solemn voice answered him.

"You are right, Great Ara-Nu. This creature displays none of the charm and perfection I have observed in the higher type Earth women."

Aunt Aggie cleared her throat. "Before discussing me further," she said reasonably, "would you mind explaining this situation to me?"

There was silence for a space and the dark eyes of the multiple-armed men were all turned on her.

"You see, she does have intelligence," said another voice. "And there is the first child—as advertised."

"Very well," said the leader authoritatively. "I shall explain it to her, and if she wishes to co-operate, well and good. If not, we shall still have the child."

There was a murmured assent from each of the gray-robed figures.

"YOU are now," said Ara-Nu, "on the planet Nu. For some reason, you Earth people call it Venus. Many thousands of years ago, there was migration from our planet to yours. There is evidence still of the descendants of our race in many of your oriental countries. They have deteriorated regrettably. The sun rays on your planet have turned their skins dark, and the hardships of your climate have made their bodies imperfect. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," said Aunt Aggie.

"Ga!" said Herbert.

"Due to disturbances in the solar system," the leader went on, "we lost

contact with those of our race who had settled on your planet. It is only recently—in the past thousand years—that we have been able to reach Earth by transportation and communication facilities. Unfortunately the present descendants of our immigrants are unable to comprehend our attempts to reach them."

"I don't believe it," said Aunt Aggie. "If I can understand you, certainly others could. English is spoken everywhere in the world today."

"You understand because of the device you hold in your hand," said Ara-Nu. "It is a kind of phonetic translator. We have many languages on our planet, just as you do. But the translator would be useless on Earth unless we transported vast quantities of equipment. It would be much simpler to train individuals as missionaries, and send them among our people to convert and educate them."

His six arms held Aunt Aggie's eyes with an almost hypnotic fascination. Each of them moved independently of the others, and at times all six were occupied. One hand brushed graceful fingers across his forehead, another adjusted the flaming robe. A third hand supported him against the desk, a fourth held the glowing pear, and the others were busy with various buttons and gadgets set into the top of the desk.

He seemed to be getting some sort of illuminated reports from time to time on a transparent plate, and relaying orders on another that glowed red like the phonetic translator.

"As you see," Ara-Nu continued talking while his arms were busy, "there is a difficulty involved. It would be impractical to send one of our present race to Earth. Instead of being accepted as a missionary, he would be considered a freak. Our descendants on your planet have long since lost all but two of their arms. We have tried unsuccessfully, to breed the two-armed type here on Nu. Earth descendants of our race, both male and female, have been brought here. The results were not satisfactory. When mated with a native of our planet, the offspring invariably have three or more arms. When mated with each other, the offspring are so far below our standards of intelligence as to be useless."

"You evidently don't know how to raise an intelligent child," said Aunt Aggie from the depths of her newly acquired wisdom. "You should read books by some of our eminent medical authorities, such as 'How to Have a Baby,' and others on child psychology."

Herbert clutched at the phonetic translator and shouted: "Bah!".

It sounded distinctly defiant, and it made Aunt Aggie aware of another sensation. She should be feeling defiant herself, but she wasn't. She not only felt no fear, she believed all that was said to her, and she had no volition of her own. She was in the grip of some power these many-armed beings wielded and she could do nothing about it. She didn't even want to do anything about it.

ARA-NU was speaking again: "No form of psychology would help the specimens we have acquired. It would take several generations to develop a reasonably intelligent and capable being. It has therefore been our plan to experiment with one of your occidental peoples. Naturally when we learned of the Perfect Mother, it seemed an ideal opportunity. If her second child could be born here on Nu and carefully nurtured in our beliefs and culture, it seemed likely that he would make an excellent missionary."

"In other words," said Aunt Aggie out of her apathy, "you were not going

to be satisfied with the conversion of your own race. You hoped to bring all the Earth races under your domination."

"Quite true," said Ara-Nu calmly. "I knew that our plan had been discovered. How was it done?"

"By intuition," said Aunt Aggie.

Ara-Nu worked rapidly with the buttons on his desk. "That will be looked into immediately," he said forcefully. "I must know how far you Earth people have developed this source of knowledge, and how you have kept it so secret. I don't see how we could have overlooked it. We are so far in advance of you people in every other way."

"That reminds me," said Aunt Aggie. "How was I brought here so quickly?"

"Actually the journey required many thousands of your light years," said Ara-Nu with some complacency. "I can't expect you to understand, but you were lifted from your house by what I can only call electronic transpiration. You have no more accurate term for it. In this way you arrived at one of our inter-stellar transports, which was then sealed and set with hair-line accuracy for this community on Nu. You and the child, and all members of the transport crew were then placed in suspended animation for the journey. Due to the time differences in various parts of the solar system, the trip, while requiring several thousand years, paradoxically took you no time at all. The electronic transpiration required one minute. It is still—" He computed rapidly after consulting a dial on his desk. "It is still only fourteen minutes past nine at the spot on Earth from which you were taken. You have been away exactly eleven minutes."

"Then if I were to go back now," said Aunt Aggie practically, "I should arrive by 9:30."

"By 9:15," Ara-Nu corrected her. "You have spent ten Earth minutes in my presence. However, that is not our plan. We have failed to get the Perfect Mother, but I have just been advised by an Investigating Committee that we do have her first child. It has been verified. There is still a possibility that we can do something with him."

"Grawf!" yelled Herbert and reached for the glowing pear.

"It is doubtful, Great Ara-Nu," said one of the solemn, gray-robed figures. "The child is not affected by the Uni-Force. He has not yet reached the age of reason, so it is impossible to control his mind, because he was not born under the Uni-Force."

"Then you must take the child at once," said Ara-Nu decisively. "The sooner he is away from all Earth contacts, the better. His training will begin immediately. The female specimen will be placed in the homo-laboratory for study and experiment."

A tall, gray-robed figure left his place and moved silently forward. Aunt Aggie knew the jig was up, but she was helpless to do anything about it. Herbert was still clutching at the glowing red pear and she let him have it. He looked annoyed as the strange, four-armed creature approached and leaned down with the obvious intention of picking him up in one pair of arms.

Herbert protested loudly and banged the phonetic translator down on the flat metal cap. The results were immediate and alarming. The metallic cap was egg-shell thin, but it shattered with a loud crash and the gray-robed figure slumped to the floor. His phonetic translator fell into Herbert's blanket and Aunt Aggie picked it up automatically.

Soft bells had set up a muted clamor.

The pervading glow flared sharply and dimmed to an uncertain flicker.

"The little fiend!" shouted Ara-Nu. "He has broken the Uni-Force!"

All of the remaining gray robed creatures held two or three hands to their heads as if in pain.

"Quickly!" ordered Ara-Nu. "We must act quickly or everything will get out of control! That child is dangerous. He is outside the Uni-Force. Get them away at once, before he wrecks the planet . . ."

AUNT AGGIE'S head jerked upward and she stared at the nursery clock. It was eighteen minutes past nine.

"My word!" she exclaimed. "What an odd thing to dream."

Herbert was bundled comfortably in his blanket. As she gazed down at him, his blue eyes opened and he yawned mightily. Then he smiled roguishly and kicked the blanket aside.

Aunt Aggie gasped. Still clutched in his chubby left hand was the phonetic translator with which he had beaned the four-armed Venusian. The red pear was no longer glowing. It was dull and the jade handle was a dirty gray, but it rattled musically as Herbert shook it.

"My conscience Herbert!" Aunt Aggie shrilled. "Was that—Were we really there?"

"Ga!" Herbert assured her, shaking his new rattle manfully.

Young Mr. and Mrs. Banning returned home early. It was a few minutes past ten when John put his key into the lock.

"Don't be nervous, dear," he said. "I'm sure everything is all right. They're probably both asleep."

As soon as they were inside, however, John was proved wrong. A shrill voice came from the nursery, raised in raucous and thoroughly abandoned song. The young Bannings hastened toward it.

Aunt Aggie's prim coiffure was badly mussed; the front of her neat black dress was wrinkled and twisted awry; and the rocker was going at a reckless clip. Herbert was wide awake and enjoying himself immensely, shaking a huge rattle all out of tempo with the song.

"My Bonnie lies over the ocean," sang Aunt Aggie piercingly. "My Bonnie lies over the sea—"

She broke off with an abrupt cough as John and Marie entered the room.

"Well," she said brightly. "Back so soon?"

"Oh, yes," admitted John, trying not to show his astonishment. "We merely stopped long enough to pay our respects. Has this fellow been giving you some trouble?"

"No indeed," declared Aunt Aggie. "Between the two of us, we managed things very well."

"Darling!" said Marie, addressing her son. "What on earth have you got there? What is it, Aunt Aggie?"

"Oh, that," answered Aunt Aggie blandly. "I—er—I brought it with me. Just something for Herbert. And that reminds me, there's a matter I'd like to discuss with you in the morning."

"Yes, Aunt Aggie?" said Marie, hopefully. "What is it?"

"Something else for Herbert," replied Aunt Aggie. "Frankly, I think the child has more sense than both of his parents put together. I intend to set up a trust fund for him with a lifetime income."

Aunt Aggie slid out of the rocker and carried Herbert to his bed where she put him down carefully.

"Of course," she said, "if he wants to help you out at any time when you happen to have some extra expense, that's his business." The End.

"But how wonderful!" exclaimed Marie. "John, isn't that marvelous for Herbert?"

"It's pretty swell, all right," John agreed. "We won't try to thank you now, Aunt Aggie. We'll let Herbert do it as soon as he's big enough."

"He's big enough now," said Aunt Aggie and reached for a chubby fist. "Good night," she murmured, shaking hands with him solemnly. "Good night, Herbie."

Vignettes OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Wallace

Discoveries made during a trip to South America led to research that made Wallace famous as a naturalist

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE was born at Usk, in the southwest of England near the border of Wales, on January 8, 1823. After leaving school he worked as a land surveyor and architect. For a short time he was Master in English in the Collegiate School at Leicester, where he became interested in botany and entomology.

When Darwin's first book "The Voyage of a Naturalist" appeared, it attracted him so strongly that, with the naturalist, H. W. Bates, he sailed early in 1848 for Brazil, the two planning to explore the Amazon valley.

Wallace followed the river to the mouth of the Negro, its main nothern affluent, and traced the latter to its source in the great upland region of southeastern Colombia. Here he discovered the curious fact that its upper waters were at one place identical with those of the Orinoco. The fact is, that at a point about 150 miles below the main southern source of the Orinoco, and at an altitude about 1000 feet above the level of the sea, the stream forks, about one-sixth of its waters passing south through the Cassiquiare and thence into the Negro, and the remainder north, thus making it possible without portage except at the Atures and Maypures rapids on the Orinoco, to travel by boat of light draught from the mouth of one river to that of the other.

Wallace made a fine collection, but had the misfortune to lose it, as well as all his notes when his ship was burnt on his voyage home from South America to England. Nevertheless he published in 1853 a highly interesting and valuable account of the country through which he had journeyed and called it "Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro."

In the following year he went to the East Indies, and explored them from the peninsula of Malacca through Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Celebes and the islands of the Bands sea to, and some distance into, New Guinea, devoting eight years to the trip, and finding himself more interested in ethnology and philology than in plant and insect life.

During a period of resting and recuperation at Sarawak in Borneo, he wrote an essay entitled "The Law which has Regulated the Introduction of New Species," which was published in 1855. He states the law as follows: "Every species has come into existence coincident both in time and space with a pre-existing closely-allied species." For three years, so he tells us, "the question of *how* changes of species could have been brought about was rarely out of mind." Finally, in February 1858, during a severe attack of intermittent fever, he began to think of Malthus' "Essay on Population," and, to use his own words, "there suddenly flashed upon me the *idea* of the survival of the fittest." The theory was thought out during the rest of the ague fit, drafted the same evening, written out in full in the two succeeding evenings, and sent to Darwin by the next post.

Darwin in England at once recognized his own theory in the manuscript essay sent by the young and almost unknown naturalist in the tropics, then a stranger to him. "I never saw a more striking coincidence," he wrote to Lyell on the very day, June 18, when he received the paper: "If Wallace had my ms. sketch written out in 1842, he could not have made a better short abstract! Even his terms now stand as heads of my chap-

ters." It arrived just at the time when Darwin had arranged to read before the Linnaen Society his own preliminary paper on the subject, in which he presented substantially the same cause —though much more completely in detail—as an explanation of variation and mutation in species. It was an embarrassing situation, and to his great credit it should be remembered that Darwin offered to suppress his paper in favor of that of Wallace. But those who were close to him, and who knew that his conclusions had been reached independently after years of investigation dissuaded him from such a course. Under the advice of Sir Charles Lyell and Sir Joseph Hooker, both essays were read at the meeting, and printed in the Transactions for that year, and in the following year Darwin's great work, "The Origin of Species," appeared.

The title of Wallace's section was "On the Tendency of Varieties to depart indefinitely from the Original Type." The "struggle for existence," the rate of multiplication of animals, and the dependence of their average numbers upon food supply, are very clearly demonstrated, and the following conclusion was reached: "Those that prolong their existence can only be the most perfect in health and vigor; . . . the weakest and least perfectly organized must always succumb."

The difference between Lamarck's theory and natural selection is very clearly pointed out. "The powerful retractile talons of the falcon and the cat tribes have not been produced or increased by the volition of those animals; but among the different varieties which occurred in the earlier and less highly organized forms of these groups, those always survived longest which had the greatest facilities for seizing their pray. Neither did the giraffe acquire its long neck by desiring to reach the foliage of more lofty shrubs, and constantly stretching its neck for the purpose, but because any varieties which occurred among its antitypes with a longer neck than usual at once secured a fresh range of pasture over the same ground as their shorter-necked companions, and on the first scarcity of food were thereby enabled to outlive them." With such clear statements as these in the paper of July 1, 1858, it is remarkable that even well known naturalists should have failed to comprehend the difference between Lamarck's and the Darwin-Wallace theory. Wallace also alluded to the resemblance of animals and more especially of insects, to their surroundings, and points out that "those races having colors best adapted to concealment from their enemies would inevitably survive the longest."

Wallace published several works of high value on the natural history of the far east. These gained for him a government pension sufficiently liberal to enable him to pass the rest of his life at home in comfort. He was a man of lofty personal character and of an amiable and genial disposition. He and Darwin became close friends and the long friendship was never interrupted. On the contrary, he admitted frankly that he had arrived at his conclusion almost entirely by accident, while Darwin had reached his only after years of patient observation and experimentation, and was unquestionably entitled to the greater credit.

In 1870 Wallace's two essays, written at Sarawak and Ternate, were published with others in a volume, "Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection." In these essays, the new theory is applied to the interpretation of certain classes of facts. In this and other works, Wallace differs from Darwin on certain points. The two concluding essays contend that man has not, like other animals, been produced by the unaided operation of natural selection, but that other forces have also been in operation.

The idea of evolution is a very old one. It was current and practically accepted in the golden age of Greece, but the cause of it was not even dimly suspected by the philosophers of the time. During the centuries that followed their eclipse, and all through the Dark Ages, the orthodox theory of a special Creation was received in Europe without question. When Lamarck ventured to doubt it, and reasserted the older idea, the causes he assigned for it—changes of environment, climate, soil, food, temperature and cross breeding, seemed inadequate. Cuvier himself would not accept them. And though Lamarck briefly touched on the competition for food as a factor, he evidently regarded it as a minor one, while for Malthus it was the principal one. The uncritical but alert Wallace seized on it as an inspiration, and without further study adopted it Darwin, however, devoted nearly a score of years to its study, before announcing it as a conclusion that could be amply proved.

Wallace published "Miracles and Modern Spiritualism" in 1875. Here is given an account of the reasons which induced him to accept beliefs which are shared by so small a proportion of scientific men. These reasons are purely experimental, and in no way connected with Christianity, for he had long before given up all belief in revealed religion. Possessed of a bold and original mind, his activities radiated in many directions and he published very many scientific papers.

Wallace was married in 1866 to the eldest daughter of the botanist, William Mitten, of Hurstpierpoint, Sussex. In 1871 he built a house at Grays, Essex, in an old chalk-pit, and after living there five years, moved successively to Croydon and Dorking. In 1881 he built a cottage at Godalming near the Charterhouse school, and grew nearly 1,000 species of plants in the garden which he made. In 1889 he moved to Dorsetshire. After his return to England in 1862 Wallace visited the continent, especially Switzerland, for rest and change and the study of botany and glacial phenomena. In 1910 he received the Order of Merit. He died at Broadstone, Dorset, on November 7, 1913.

SCIENTIFIC

The ceremonial headdress of the Pueblo Indians consists of a top-knot of macaw feathers and a hanging plume of eagle feathers, proof of its origin in the ancient Itza traditions of the tribes of Chichen Itza

Black is the sacred color of the Sioux, and it is used in their pottery. Their god is Wakon, who is supposed to dwell in the Black Hills. Significantly, their totem is also the Black Turtle of the ancient Itza.

It is important to note that the headdress of the Itza is used in the Dance of the Turtle of the Zuni Pueblo Indians. Here is further proof of the ancient relationship between the two races.

Another clue to the wandering Itzaes comes in the totems of the Sioux, ancient enemies of the Chippewa. The term Sioux is an appellation applied to these enemies as a mark of disrespect. The Sioux worship volcanoes and build pyramids—their wigwams

The House of the Turtle, so-called because of its sculptured motif, its elegant line of round columns which surround it, is further proof of the Pueblos Itza beginning

Robert Fuqua

MYSTERIES

THE TURTLE TOTEM

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

The totem of the turtle is a significant bit of symbolism in the ancient history of man. Here we learn some of its history and its secret meanings

IT WAS during one of the Pueblo festivals, that I first saw the "Dance of the Turtle." It was not the worn and picturesquely irregular housetops of Ancient Zuni, nor the colorful crowd, but the costume of the dancers which held my eyes.

The men had top-knots of macaw feathers, and three eagle plumes hanging down the back. (Strange, is it not, that macaw feathers should form part of a ceremonial costume in the desert?)

Both the men and women of the dance were dressed in white. The men wore white girtles, the women flowing white mantles. They flashed with silver and turquoise. And in that hot desert sun my thoughts fled back to the Mayas.

I was remembering again Uxmal under its thick covering of jungle. I was particularly remembering the "House of the Turtle" (so-called because of its sculptured motif) and its simple and elegant line of round columns encircling the beautiful edifice and catching the early, slanting rays of the morning sun.

I was also remembering that Bancroft spoke of a pavement of slate tiles laid in copper in the vicinity of many turtle vases, near the mouth of the river San Juan[1], while in Cinaca-Mecallo, where the remains or ruins cover an oval area similar to the shell of a turtle, "the material used in all the structures is a slate-like stone in thin blocks, joined by a cement which resembles in color and consistence, molten lead.[2]"

Perhaps this was but the earlier building material of the Itzaes, who later built largely with hewn limestone blocks laid in a cement which is much stronger than our average mortar. We know that the Itzaes were of The Turtle, because one plaque in Chichen Itza shows the figure of Itzamna, their national god, emerging from the shell of a turtle. Furthermore, the symbols and figures of the turtle and snake are almost inexplicable mingled in all the Mayan ruined cities, until we remember that in the oldest traditions, —the Itzaes conquered the Chanes, or the people of the Snake, who were the first owners of the land, and who were "all the descendents of the Great-Water-Serpent who crawled out of the sunrise sea."

Whence came these Itzaes? The trail seems to lead south. Not only the oldest turtle monuments are to be found in the zone of the Isthmus, but the glorious quetzal plumes which hung down from the top-knot of the Itzae head-dress pointed to a southern origin for their wearers, since the magnificent quetzal bird, possibly specially bred for untold ages before the break-up of the great aviaries of the ancients set it free, is a bird of the tropics. And it has ever been, along with the eagle, and the macaw, the supreme bird of American royalty.

So in the pueblo "Dance of the Turtle," I saw the wandering Itzaes, driven out from their southern lands, trooping through the pueblo country, beautiful in their flowing white garments and respendent in their waving quetzal plumes and their jewelry.

As is the way with Amerind lore, it was to be after a lapse of several years that I got my next clue to the wandering Itzae. It came from my old Chippewa friend (the Chippewa tribe speaks an Algonkin tongue) Marksman. He had just returned to the shore of Keeweenaw Bay, Lake Superior, from a visit to one of the reservations of Minnesota where the Chippewas are lodged very close to their old enemies, the Sioux. (Incidentally the word Sioux is a dis-respectful term given these people by their enemies, and which in the typical grim humor of the Amerind, the tribe will not bother to deny or to explain to the whites. The tribe's own name for themselves is The Dacotah.)

Marksman was busy describing a funny incident, when I interrupted him. He never did get to finish.

"Excuse me, Marksman, but I understood you to say that because the Chippewa had defeated the Sioux at your last tribal battle, the Chippewa had carved a big turtle upside-down?"

[1] *Bancroft, pp. 23, Vol. IV, Antiquities.*

[2] *Bancroft, pp. 117, Vol. IV, Antiquities.*

He nodded.

"Then the Turtle is the totem of the Sioux?"

He caught the excitement in my voice and nodded quietly. (To lift the mystery of the past even a little, he was willing to go to any length, if it might prove an enemy tribe to have once had a great past.)

"Tell me all you know of their pottery, is it a polished black ware?"

"Yes, black is their sacred color. Their god Wakon is supposed to dwell in The Black Hills."

"Do they have signs of the Venus Calendar, I mean, is the evening star important to them?"

"They say that they were organized by the evening star. And the chief village always has the name of the Evening Star."

"Do they worship volcanoes, and build pyramids?"

"Dunno about that. Their wigwams, they call 'em teepees looks like mountains—white mountains smoking."

"You are right" I gasped, "And furthermore, the Aztec name for white peak is almost identical![3] Probably that is also why the Siouan, Caddoan and Iroquoian tribes burned their captives. It was merely ritualistic sacrifice to their Fire-god?"

"Sure They burn Chippewa too.'

Into my mind was flashing many telescopic pictures which were of themselves only loose ends. The polished black pottery of the Mayas, and that so recently revived by the Pueblo.[4] The most magnificent ruin of Mayan antiquity—the stupendous "Temple of the Warriors," sometimes called the "Temple of the Thousand Columns," and its repeated turtle-motif! The drooping feathered head-dress of the "Dacotahs" which seemed to be a cross between that of the Mayas and that of the Aztecs! The polished black pottery of the Aztecs, particularly reserved for the elegant table of Montezuma.

Also there was that name Wakon. Its trail too, led south, though I was more prepared for the dragon worship carrying an Amen name.

"Tell me, Marksman, what does this god Wakon look like? Is he a big snake, or a turtle?"

"No. Him all-e-same Thunderbird."

FOR a moment this stopped the trend of my speculations. I began to check over the name. Wako was the great deity of the South Seas. He had sometimes been spoken of as coming in a fleet of ships. Dr. Buck in his "Vikings of the Sunrise," said that this figure was probably that of a real individual, and according to the old chants, checked to about the time of Christ or 1st cent. A.D. Wakoyama is a coast town of Japan, yama meaning "mountain," and incidentally very close to the Zamna name for the old volcanic fire-god.

We next hear of Wako in the Americas where a town near the Peruvian coast is named for him. From the there we have the clear legends of Matto Grosso. The Waikanoes and Tukanoes tell of their great god Wako who came up the Amazon in a fleet of ships. He was a bearded white man who performed many miracles of healing, taught them many arts, and after staying one year, sailed away. The Waikanoes trace their descent, incidentally to a water-snake or great water-monster, while the ruling Tukanoes have the totem of a great bird. The fact that their neighbors have a black polished pottery may be but a coincidence. Both these tribes in physical type, and in domestic plants suggest a south-sea-island background.

However, the long-headed, hawk nosed, red-skinned, fire-worshipping Karibs who poured in from the Antilles in their long war-canoes and spread both up and down the Atlantic coast, driving the round-headed Waikano and Tukano tribes far into Matto Grosso, also revere the name of Wako. The Kiribi had a leader named Wakna who is similar to the Great Wako. He too, dressed in flowing white garments, came in a fleet of ships and performed great miracles of healing. Their neighbor and brother-tribe, the Summo say that they were sired by Masya kana and their mother was Itiuana. The first name is not recognizable, but the latter is the Itzae Itzamna in another dialect.

If we were to base the connection between the Dacotah of North America and the fierce Karib, on only the likness of fireworship, and black pottery, it would indeed be too thin to pass the Law of Averages. However, when we realize that both tribes also built palisaded villages, had a definite trace of an ancient and fast disintegrating caste system, as well as of the ancient Venus calendar, used women-slaves, as well as sometimes allowing their own women to become warriors, and told time by notched sticks, quippus and seeds enclosed in a gourd, we are pressing the Law of Averages. Nor have we in any way exhausted the list, but rather, let us say, we have only scratched the surface, leaving this tremendous job of research to a later and more careful student.

It is a curious fact that these culture-traits of the Antilles, which are so strong in the Muskhogeans, and particularly in the Natchez, play out in the Dacotahs and the Iroquois to mere suggestions, showing the much greater distance in time the latter tribes are from the common center. However, we must remember that the Dacotahs, whose holding of women-slaves degenerated the place of their own women, nevertheless, still allowed the old women a hand in the choosing of a new chief: while John Carver, a traveler in the eighteenth century, found them telling the passage of time by the aid of the notched stick

[3] *To hang a totem upside down is to signify it is dead.*

[4] *Montezuma's table, according to Bernal Diaz was covered with a table cloth, polished black and golden dishes. He was entertained while he ate, and when he had finished, used finger bowl and napkins.*

and the quippu—a realm which we particularly link to the Inca!

NOR would this be all that this later student in comparative research will discover. He will find a tremendous likeness of ceremony. This would not be confined to the striking similarities of the rituals of "Lighting the New Fire," or "Renewing The Sacred Fire," but they would extend into other ceremonies. But that is with the future. And that same student will also discover that the many "stealing the fire" myths of the North American tribes throw interesting sidelights upon his problem. For these myths do not pertain to fire as such, which man has had since he could walk upright, but to this ritualistic Eternal-Fire which seems to have entered America from the Antilles.

Perhaps the most interesting fact about these old fire-worshippers is the manner in which they differ. Most of the North American tribes expose their dead, as do the Algonkin Eagle Totem. But the true Karibs seat them on a stone bench, in a stone lined circular or oval grave, in such a manner that they will be facing the rising sun. Similar graves to this are to be found on the coast of California, near the vicinity of Santa Barbara, and in Florida, on an old land surface which runs out into the sea. (Later Karib tribes buried their dead under their long-canoes or cremated them in the Sacred-fire.) It should also be noticed in this connection that the dead Incas were mummified in a sitting position, and placed in the Temple-of-the-Sun, in such a manner that they faced the great golden disc whose intricately sculptured face was melted down by the Spanish.

There is one more curious connection to the Turtle. In old China, where the Turtle and The Snake are considered to be black, and hold the northern color-direction of their old zodiac, they are thought to have had dominion over water, which is said to be the black element. Furthermore, according to their mythology, their written language comes from the mystic markings upon the shell of this Turtle, and thus they are indebted to the totem for their script? China also shows signs of early attempts to thrust the Turtle into the class of evil or "untouchable" gods. In Japan the turtle is much revered.

What is the ancient tie which binds the elegant Itzaes, the architects who fashioned the "Temple of the Warriors," the savage Karibs and the yelling followers of Crazy Horse, who wiped out the forces of General Custer? From what volcano, possibly now lost beneath the blue-green waves of the Atlantic, did these immigrants, or possibly refugees from a geological catastrophe, bring their Sacred fire? Perhaps, at least in our generation, one asks the question as vainly as he might if he actually personally addressed one of these old mummies seated upon his stone bench and staring out to sea. Who can say with our present knowledge, what land of memory his sightless eyes may be seeking?

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SCIENTIFIC HEALING

TWO new methods of treating burns—one employing thin sheets made of dried human blood plasma, the other using a medicated paraffin wax spray were reported recently by navy doctors. Wounds covered either way required no further dressing.

In the United States Navy Medical Bulletin both methods were described for use by naval surgeons under battle conditions. In the dried plasma technique, tough, thin, transparent sheets are made by dissolving dried plasma in water and heating the mixture. The sheet is impregnated with a sulfa drug to increase its germ-killing powers, and then it is laid onto the surface of the burn to halt seepage of blood fluid and promote healing.

The sheet slowly transmits to the wound the blood fraction fibrin which promotes coagulation.

Lieut. Commander Benjamin Pollock said burns and other war wounds that have resisted healing for as long as two months with various other applications had healed in from six to nine days after the plasma sheets were applied.

A technique for the local treatment of burns by spraying them with a wax composition, after first dusting the wounds with sulfa drugs, was described by Lieut. Cyril L. Vance. "Pain is relieved almost instantly," Vance reported, "probably simply by excluding air from the injured tissue." He said that the method was simple and quick—"hence it is applicable where a large number of patients are to be handled at one time." He also made the point that this method does not require any sterile dressings and thereby relieves the patient of the painful process of dressing changes.—*A. Carr.*

MYSTERIOUS CRATER

By LEROY YERXA

JIM WINTER rode easily in the saddle. He was lanky and the realization of his own height may have caused him to hunch down, shoulders bent forwards, arms hanging limply at his sides. On the trail behind him, he could see June Freemont, slim, at home on the back of her white mare, her long dark hair floating back in the moonlight. As he looked back, she flashed him a smile.

"Grand night, isn't it, Jim?"

He nodded.

"What's Bob think about it?"

Bob Talmud, fifteen, freckled, called from his position well to the rear, "Uncle Jim, how much farther?"

Jim Winter lunged forward, but it was obvious he was too late; June Freemont screamed as she fell backward.

The crater looked as though it had been made by a meteorite—but who ever saw a square meteorite? And then it opened . . . .

"Perhaps half mile," he said. "It's beyond that last ridge."

He pointed ahead where the trail climbed abruptly and was lost in the distance. They rode on and the night was silent save for the clop-clop of the horses' hooves against the graveled trail. The ridge seemed to grow larger and the moon rose behind it. The sky was very dark, with a Wyoming moon bright against the darkness. The horses slowed their pace and halted at the top of the ridge. They seemed ill at ease.

The air was filled with a pungent, burned odor. June rode up and halted at Winter's side. Together they stared down into the huge, mysterious crater. The girl caught her breath sharply.

"Jim—I didn't realize it would be as large as this."

They waited for Bob to reach them. Then Winter swung down easily from the saddle.

"I don't think anyone realizes," he admitted. "And there are a lot more things I'd like to know about it."

The crater was about a mile across, a huge, cup-like depression in the earth. Below, the moon outlined huge boulders and smooth, soft surfaces. Every inch of ground below the rim was dead black in color.

The Mysterious Crater, newspapers had called it for the past week since Winter first discovered the place.

June dismounted and came to Winter's side.

"What caused it? That is, what's *your* guess?"

Winter shook his head. He was sure of one thing. Greater minds than his had been unable to fathom the cause.

"You know as much as I do," he admitted. "The papers say nothing but a huge falling body could have made that hole. I guided one group of scientists up here yesterday. They haven't had time to come to any definite conclusion. They took measurements and went away shaking their heads. So far, they're stumped."

She waited, and he went on.

"I've a hunch that this can't be explained by purely scientific study. That's why I suggested we come up tonight, before too many people have covered the ground."

He turned to Bob Talmud.

"Well, boy, if we are to be the first explorers, we'd better get started. Are the ropes ready?"

Talmud grinned.

"Sure are," he said.

June Freemont's hand was on Winter's arm. He turned, and was startled by the fear and uncertainty he found in her eyes.

"Jim—are you sure this is all right? That there is no danger?"

"Nothing to worry about," Winter insisted. "I'm puzzled, that's all. If a meteor hit here, why wasn't the vibration of the area felt and recorded? Why didn't science have a record on their machines of the exact moment the crater was formed?"

She waited.

"It seems to me," he said finally, "that the disturbance may have come from *below*, and not from above. That's what I want to find out. There may be a vent or shaft somewhere down near the bottom."

"But there's no trace of an opening from here."

"I know," he admitted. "That's why I promised Bob that we'd have a look before the world snatches our private exploration away from us. After all, this is my ranch. We are entitled to a little fun."

June stiffened suddenly, becoming frightened and not knowing why. She was determined that they take her with them.

"And you expect me to wait here at

the rim, content to watch you two go down to—well—down *there* without knowing what you'll find?"

His eyes twinkled.

"Without you at the top, we might not get out again," he said. "A rope and someone to handle it is mighty important."

June smiled uncertainly.

"Jim Winter," she said, "you have a way of making me do exactly as you wish."

For a moment his eyes searched hers, and his gloved hand brushed her arm. Then Bob was bringing a length of heavy rope and shouting excitedly.

"All set, Uncle Jim? Let's lower away."

Winter stepped away from the girl.

"Okay," he said with enthusiasm. "It's up to you, June. I'm cinching the rope to Corny's saddle. We'll slide down to that slope fifteen feet under the rim. When we give the signal, ride Corny away from the rim, slowly. That'll be our elevator, coming up."

He was already busy, cinching the end of the rope to the saddle horn on the horse. Corny whinnied a little and tried to sidestep. Then he stood very still as Winter made the knot fast.

WINTER himself went down first, hand over hand with the rope curled about his knees. He hit the dust below the rim, struggled to keep a foothold and a cloud of black cinders rose about him. Choking, he waited until the dust settled, then jerked lightly on the rope.

"Okay, Bob," he shouted. "Come down."

Unlike the air at the top of the rim, down here it was dead and hushed. His voice died against the walls. He felt something on the rope, then Bob came down and Winter grasped him around the waist and stood him on the ground. The boy was gasping for breath.

Winter looked up. He could see June Freemont's face peering over the edge of the pit.

"Don't go away," he called, "we'll need you in a little while."

He started slipping, and sliding toward the bottom of the pit. The dust was worse near the bottom. It billowed up about them, hiding the sky. Winter wondered if they dared go all the way to the bottom. Bob was choking. When the descent seemed hopeless, the ashes cleared and the slope became hard, black rock. Two-thirds of the way to the bottom, the heat had been intense. It had baked everything a polished ebony, so hard that their boots failed to make an impression.

The sky was a round oval that seemed to end at the edge of the pit. The world was gone as completely as though this place was all that remained. A huge, perfectly square boulder stood in the direct center of the crater's bottom.

It was about eight feet square, without a mar on the surface. It had not been visible from the top of the pit for it blended into the background.

"It couldn't have fallen from above," Winter said, "without burying itself, or breaking into a thousand pieces."

Bob laughed.

"Darned if I know where else it could have come from," he said. "It isn't like any of the native rocks."

Winter didn't reply. He moved around it slowly, kicking at the solid foundation on which the square rock stood.

He had gone half way around when a loud "click" sounded behind him. Then sounds of a quick scuffle on the floor of the crater came from the far side of the rock. Winter started to run. Something swung out in his path and he hit it, hard, his face smashing into it. He went down. A startled cry came from where he had

left Bob. That was all he knew.

He came to, staring up at a moon that was high over the crater. Where was Bob? Far away on the west rim, he knew that June was waiting. It must have been a full hour since he was knocked out. That much time would explain the change in the position of the moon.

He didn't know what had struck him or why Bob Talmud had cried out. He was sure now, of one thing.

The pit had been made from underneath, and not by a falling object. The pit wasn't a natural formation.

Someone, or something, had caused the large stone to "click" and swing around abruptly. It had been the sharp movement of the stone that knocked Winter down. Bob had cried out, and now he was gone. Gone below the stone, into a world that was so hot that it had burned a vast crater in the surface of the earth.

JIM WINTER had thought that June Freemont would understand—would know that he could do nothing about Bob. He had stood on the rim of the canyon, dirty and exhausted, trying to explain how useless it was to go back without proper equipment.

"But—you can't just *leave* him down there, Jim; it isn't human. Bob is your nephew; he depends on you. He's been taken away by someone. We've got to try to help him."

He shook his head.

"I fought with that stone," he said quietly. "I tried to wrench it away with my bare hands. I tried—and I was helpless. I've got to have help—and explosives."

She mounted slowly, without further conversation. She was riding down the trail before he had finished coiling the rope. He didn't try to speak to her again. He understood how June felt. It had been his suggestion that Bob come with them and that they explore the pit.

Inside Jim Winter a burning anger was slowly fanned white hot. He would come back and blast that stone out of the pit.

He was broken hearted over Bob's disappearance, but he knew that no man could have anticipated what had happened there in the crater.

A DOZEN men were working about the stone. The midday heat was intense, sending heat waves racing across the dull, black surface. No breeze came down from above. It was the heat of the prairie intensified ten-fold. These men were friends of Jim Winter—friends of the boy Winter had raised from childhood. Men who were hard, and prepared for anything.

"I'm darned if this doesn't sound like a dream," Frank Briggs said stubbornly. "Packing dynamite around a rock that is supposed to lead to hell—or something just as bad." Briggs was Winter's neighbor. He owned fifteen thousand acres of range land, a bad temper, and a share in June Freemont's affections.

Winter sat alone, worrying about Bob and wondering what the explosion would reveal. A full box of dynamite had been planted around the base. Now, because a stone could be jarred loose from the top, another box was placed above the stone and packed with soil to keep it from exploding without effect.

Sheriff Nate Beasely was here, and three of his men, all carrying shotguns. Winter's own gun was loose in the holster. Sam Newall, skinny, squint-eyed in the sun, said:

"I guess we got enough powder around it. She ought to move ten feet."

They moved away, up the sides of the crater. They flopped on their stom-

achs and hugged the ground, waiting. Newall lighted the fuses and started to run. He flopped beside Winter.

"Get your head down, Son," he said. "There's a lot of powder down there."

A dull, earth shaking "B O O M" came from below them. Dust flew into the air, hiding the sun. Winter stood up. He heard Newall cussing loudly.

"Didn't even jar the durn thing."

The stone was there, as it had been before. Two boxes of dynamite hadn't moved it.

THEY tried three times. June came in the afternoon and Briggs helped her into the pit. Sheriff Beasely was getting anxious to leave. He and Briggs were beginning to wonder just what had happened last night in the shadows of the crater.

"Look here, Jim," Beasely said. "You sure that darned rock *moved?* You sure Bob didn't wander away somewhere and get killed in a slide?"

Winter's eyes narrowed.

"It moved," he said.

Briggs stood at June's side where she sat on a small boulder.

"Jim, you didn't hide that boy and forget where to look for him, did you?" Briggs' voice was accusing.

Winter turned slowly.

"If you're looking for trouble, Frank," he said slowly, "say so. No use beating around the bush."

June stood up. Her eyes were hard and bright. Winter thought he saw tears in them. She stood in front of Briggs.

"There is enough trouble now," she said. Her lips were white. "I know that Jim wouldn't hurt Bob purposely. There—there may have been an accident."

The sheriff was staring at Winter.

"What you got to say about it, Jim? We made sure that nothing would move that stone. You claim it moved easy last night, and swallowed Bob under it. You sure something else didn't happen to Bob? You sure you ain't holding something back to keep out of trouble?"

Winter was standing alone now, his back to the stone.

"I think more of Bob Talmud than anyone else on earth," he said. "I brought him down here last night on what I thought was a harmless bit of exploration. I don't expect you to believe what happened. But I'm not giving up yet. The boy is under that rock and I'll reach him or die trying."

He stared straight at June. Her eyes wavered and she turned away.

Sam Newall picked up a box of fuses and dynamite caps.

"Guess you won't need me any more," he said. "That boulder ain't gonna move again, not if I can't blow it out."

Behind Winter, a clear "click" sounded beneath the stone. He stepped away from it quickly, his gun springing into his hand. He heard Sheriff Beasely swear, and saw from the corner of his eye that Briggs had whipped around, a dozen feet up the trail, his big six-gun in his hand. Briggs' other hand was on June's arm.

The rock started to move.

THERE was no doubt of it. The black stone was rolling slowly away from its position, and as it moved, smoke started to streak up against its sides. The men behind him were alert, guns ready. Their eyes were wide with fright. No one doubted now that Jim Winter had told the truth.

Before Winter could fire at anything, a roaring flame shot from under the rock. It passed them in a wide, flaming band and swept toward Briggs and June. It was like a flame from a powerful torch, sweeping forward, falling over June Freemont's unprotected form.

As Winter's gun boomed, *he knew that there was something, someone in that fire.* Men with bright, flaming flesh. A black robe—or perhaps it was billowing dark smoke, fell over June, and as the flames touched Briggs, Winter heard his gun go off twice in quick succession, and a scream came from Briggs' blistered lips.

The fire retreated swiftly, sucked under the stone.

Winter stood there, gun held limply in his hand. The other men didn't move. The stone was closed once more, the fire crypt sealed.

But they were not watching the rock.

Up the trail, lying on its face, was the charred corpse of Frank Briggs. His gun was lying beside him, his body burned beyond recognition.

June was gone. She had gone beneath the stone, enveloped in the black cloud of smoke, sucked away by the roaring inferno of flame.

Florence Briggs said:

"Jim Winter, you're not kidding me a bit. My brother Frank was a stinker. He tried to steal June from you and he's tried for the past twenty years to pull every dirty trick on you that he could."

Winter stood near the stone fireplace in the big front room of the Briggs' ranch. He wasn't smiling, but the fiery-tempered little red head, Florence Briggs, brought a twinkle into his eyes. The twinkle vanished as he remembered what had happened in the pit.

"You didn't ask me to come here to talk about Frank," he said. "Sid Waldo said you wanted to see me about something important."

FLORENCE sat down on a log bench near the fireplace. She crossed her legs.

"Maybe I'm a darned fool," she said. "Maybe thinking as much of you as I do, I'd ought to let June go hang and go after you myself. You know I've loved you since I was a kid."

She wasn't smiling. Her dark blue eyes were troubled.

"But I can't do it," she went on. "June is one swell gal, and I think I can help you save her, if she can be saved."

Winter nodded.

"Go on," he said.

"*You* go on," she urged. "First I've got to know what you think of all this. What's happening below that rock?"

Winter shrugged.

"If I knew," he admitted, "I might know how to fight back. Someone or something dragged Bobby under it before I could save him. I didn't see anything but flame when the attack was made on June. Yet, Frank was burned on the spot while June was dragged away in that flame."

Florence shuddered.

"It—it must have been pretty awful."

"It was," Winter said. "I realized we couldn't do anything about it at the time. I've been doing research work on the under earth activity of this region for years."

Florence nodded.

"I know," she said. "I remember how you used to be more interested in books than necking."

Winter's face reddened slightly.

"The heat of the underworld seems to come closest to the surface of the earth here in Wyoming. I've made charts showing all known geysers, hot springs and hidden streams. According to the study that has been made, there was never a trace of under-surface heat on the site of the present crater."

He paused, staring at her intently.

"Call me crazy, Florence," he said, "but I think that crater was formed by artificial force, a force controlled by creatures dwelling beneath the crust of

the earth."

To his amazement the girl's expression never changed.

"I had that figured out last night," she said. "That's why I know I'm the only one that can help you enter the cavity under that rock."

He waited patiently for her to continue.

"In the first place, these fire-creatures, if that's what they are, stole Bobby. Why didn't they take you also?"

"I wondered about that," he said. "Perhaps I was just lucky."

She shook her head.

"No," she said. "Once perhaps, but what happened the second time? Frank was killed because he had to be dead for them to reach June. No one else was attacked. They choose women and children but they aren't interested in men."

Winter left the fireplace and started to pace up and down the room. She watched him, wondering.

"Look here," he said suddenly. "If you're trying to say that being a woman, you also would be taken, forget it. I won't have . . ."

"You don't have a thing to say about it," she interrupted. "Troops have been here from Camp Northern. They failed to blast that rock with high explosives. A number of people don't even believe your story. The Sheriff is going crazy trying to convince the public that the story he tells is true. *But no one can move that rock.*

"Yes, we have to assume that if June and Bobby were drawn into the cavity, they were wanted—alive. Something protected them. The same something would protect me—but would probably destroy you.

"Jim—it's up to you and I. I'll take the chance. You must equip yourself with an asbestos suit, try to follow me, and take your chances. Are you game?"

Winter stared at her. There was agony in his expression. He knew why Florence Briggs wanted to help. Knew that it had nothing to do with interest in June. Florence loved him and was trying to help him.

"I have to do something," he admitted. "It doesn't look as though I have much chance to pull the trick alone. On the other hand, your reasoning seems sound enough. I suppose if you really want . . ."

She was at his side, hand on his arm, staring up at him earnestly.

"We'll go tonight," she said. "Jim—somehow I feel that it is you who is taking the risk and not I. They'll want me as they did Bobby and June. You'll have to take the chance of being killed at once. Please protect yourself and try to be cautious."

"I will," he said.

He was thinking of the roaring flame that shot out at Frank Briggs, sucking life from his body.

"MY ONLY chance," Jim said, "is to follow you into the pit without being seen. They must be able to see what goes on above the rock. I'll try to follow you down and keep out of sight. When and if the rock opens, I'll get under it somehow when they come after you."

Florence was standing before him on the rim of the pit. The moon shone down on the blackened hole, making the ebony stone at the bottom of the crater glow in the pale light. The prairie was deserted and lonely. It was close to midnight, and Florence Briggs drew the woolen jacket closer about her neck. She wore whipcord riding breeches and riding boots. Her face was pale and eager in the moonlight.

"We'd better go down now," she said. "Here's to us—may we come out of this

on our feet."

Winter helped her into the rope sling and lowered her down the edge of the crater. He saw the spurt of dust rise as she hit the slope below, and prepared to go down himself.

This afternoon he had borrowed an asbestos fire-fighting suit from the oil well supply company at Cody. It was a cumbersome, heavy outfit with a helmet fitted with an eye-piece.

He followed Florence down the rope, then as she waited for him, donned the suit and pulled the mask over his face. Inside the suit the heat was stifling. He motioned her down the trail. He had placed a belt around his waist. In it was his revolver, old-fashioned, heavy, that he had handled since he was a boy. He fingered it lovingly, hoping it would get him through.

By this time, Florence had reached the flat area at the bottom of the crater. He stopped about ten feet from the stone, after crawling toward it slowly, keeping in the protection of the rocks.

He wiped the dust from the eye-piece and watched the girl. She went around the stone twice, pushing at it with her hands, acting curious, as though it had drawn her here alone. The act was good. She hadn't looked at him since she left the rim. She made no move to betray his presence.

Five minutes went by. Florence had sat down near the boulder, staring up at it. She looked very small and helpless, and for a moment, pride surged within Winter. Then he remembered June. Somewhere below the rock, hidden in God knew what kind of a trap, June and Bobby were waiting for him—waiting to escape the hell into which they had been drawn.

What was that?

The moonlight shimmered on the rock, as though it had moved a fraction of an inch. He stiffened, crouching forward on his hands and knees, ready to spring to his feet.

The stone moved three or four inches. The girl didn't move—didn't seem to notice.

Then he saw it—the thin, flickering tongue of flame that shot up and spread out on the ground. A huge cloud of black smoke surged from under the rock, billowed out and covered Florence Briggs. He heard her scream as he sprang to his feet and plunged into the center of the cloud. He couldn't see. He ran straight forward across the smoke covered ground, and hit something yielding, like a soft, dark blanket. It gave under his weight, then enveloped him completely, choking him, dragging him toward the rock.

He thought he heard Florence scream again, but in the crackling flames, he couldn't be sure.

Then he stumbled and fell over something. He was falling.

He hurtled over and over, down and down. His body landed in a smothering, yielding mass and he felt all air cut off from his face. He fought to get the helmet away from his head, but it was useless. Then he fell forward into a smothering pit and lost consciousness.

JIM WINTER awakened with a terrific, searing heat beating into his skull. He groaned and turned over slowly. His arm hit something hard and it reminded him that his entire body, still encased in the heavy suit, was throbbing with pain. His helmet had loosened and perspiration bathed his face.

He thought he was somewhere below the rock. Around him in the darkness he could see shadowy rocks.

He lay still for several minutes, waiting for his breathing to become regular again. He removed the helmet to find that although the heat must be at least

110 degrees, he could breathe with some comfort. The cave was dark, save for the reflection of rising flame in a distance. He stood up, grasped a rock near him and held on. When he was strong enough, he left the natural hiding place and started to search around the cavern.

It was small, hardly fifteen feet across. On the far side flames shot up from a round pit, lighting the place. The heat came from this pit. There was oxygen. He could breathe.

He explored the walls carefully, but could find no way out.

Yet, he reasoned, Florence and her captors had come this way. June and Bobby had been carried down through this chamber into some other place below.

He had to find his way out. Had to follow them.

He knelt on the edge of the pit of flames. He noticed that although fire shot up every few minutes, that there were short intervals when the flame disappeared from sight. *Also, the bottomless pit was the only opening left in the cavern.*

It was a wild suicidal idea, but he had to take a chance. He had to follow his friends through that single entrance to the underworld.

The more he thought of it, the more sure he was that the fire pit was his only way out. He started to time the seconds between flames. Ten—fifteen—sixteen. For seventeen seconds the flame died and the hole was black and seemingly bottomless. He slipped the helmet over his head and waited. The flame climbed upward, making crazy designs across the roof. Then it was gone. He took a deep breath, slipped his legs over the edge of the hole and said:

"Here goes nothing."

He dropped.

THE Temple of Flame was ready. Another queen would be added to Boona's collection. Boona, King of the Fire People, sat on his throne in the sacred circle of fire. The Temple of Flame was huge. Its columns held the roof of the cavern, and through the crevices in the floor, fire shot up and roared in triumph to the people of Boona's realm.

The guards came from the entrance, tall, flame-colored men with their spears that shot fire. They came in close formation and in the midst was the Queen who had been captured above. The Queen sat on a feathered throne, carried by ten Flame Guards. She sat at ease, her head tipped back, her slim lithe body clad only in the fire-robe that left little to the imagination, and set the heart of Boona aflame with admiration.

At the foot of the forty thrones, the Fire Guards halted and the carriers came on, up the ten ebony steps to the throne circle.

The Queen was lifted gently from her moving throne and carried to the one closest Boona. The King allowed his eyes to follow her as she was placed beside him. Then, smiling quietly, he compared her with the thirty-eight who graced the throne circle. Each of them was perfect. Round, deep-eyed and slim, chosen from perfect stock. Each, Boona thought with a smile, very quiet and dignified.

And the new Queen was silent with the others. On earth, her name had been June Freemont. One would not recognize her now, for she had changed. The new Queen had, as had the others, been placed in the Fire Pool. She was dead and would never speak again. She would not trouble the ears of King Boona, for his wives must respect him and never speak in his presence. They were for his eyes only, and

he would never have to await their presence.

Thirty-nine of the Forty Queens of Boona had been embalmed in the Fire Pool. Their bodies would remain perfect forever. Their mouths silent.

FLORENCE BRIGGS held her breath as the choking fire seemed to envelop her body. Then she saw that within the flame, *men* walked. Tall, normal men who wore red robes of an odd material, and carried a huge black net which they threw over her head. Oddly, underneath the black net, she felt none of the fire that at first had threatened to burn her. It was cool and protecting. Through her mind surged thoughts of Jim. Could he follow her?

She felt herself snatched up in strong arms. They were carrying her down, swiftly, surely. Down where? Under the rock of course, but where? She couldn't be sure.

She didn't struggle. Fear welled up within her, choking off any other emotions she might have experienced. She was rigid in their arms. Then they placed her on her feet. She struggled with the net, for she couldn't see through it. She was able to breathe, but the thought of not knowing what would happen next—not being able to see her captors, frightened her.

The net fell away from her.

She stood in a small circle of men. Their bodies were slim and well-molded. They seemed normal, but for the bright red suits that fitted them snugly from head to foot.

Or were they suits?

The light was dim, but suddenly she knew that the men themselves were red. Their skin was bright crimson.

One came close to her and tipped up her chin with his fingers. His face, brilliant red, was covered with perspiration. His smile was devilish.

"The King will see this one," he said with enthusiasm. "She is of good quality."

A chuckle went around the group. Another voice said:

"Don't go too close, Wanno, or the King may preserve you also for his collection."

Wanno, the one who had touched Florence, whirled around. His anger was obvious.

"The King chose Wanno as your leader," he said, "because he knows Wanno has good taste. Another remark like that and you will face the Fire Pool."

They shrank away from him, for he was evidently a person of power. He picked up Florence easily in his arms.

"Lead the way to the Temple," he snapped.

In his arms, the girl had time to see the way they were going. The cave was narrow and the walls were covered with flickering lights. It was like a strange trail into Dante's inferno. Crevices in the floor sent up steam and occasionally shot up tongues of flame.

FOR a long time they walked in silence. Wanno's arms were tightly about her and she tried to ignore the interest in his eyes. She recognized a possible friend and a terrible enemy in the slim, well-built youth of the fire world into which she had been thrust.

The trail widened and they came out into a new world—a world under the vast dome of the cavern.

It was dark here, but these strange men went ahead swiftly. She guessed that they could see their way, for they never stumbled. Occasionally one of them called back to Wanno, asking him if his burden was light and perhaps pleasant. Wanno's arms only went more tightly about her and he disdained giving them a reply.

They reached a wall, and it was drawn open by some unseen force. Florence found herself staring into the magnificent fire hall of the Temple of Flame.

The Temple was deserted, save for a huge stone diaz some distance from her. On the diaz she could see many thrones, and seated on them, the figures of lovely girls.

As they went closer, Wanno let her stand and walk alone. He stayed close to her, his hand on her arm. The grip was gentle and firm.

To her right and left, the floor was split by crevices, and from them fire roared upward, sending flames to the roof. The place was very hot.

King Boona saw them come. He rose slowly, a thin, bony figure of a man, his skin red, his robe hanging limply around his body. Boona's eyes were black and deep-set. His tongue came out to lick thin, bloodless lips.

She walked very slowly, her eyes on him. Somehow he seemed to draw her ahead and she knew that Wanno had stopped and was no longer at her side.

"Welcome, new Queen."

She heard his words but their meaning did not sink into her brain. She moved onward, automatically, up the ten steps to face him. He met her, one red, bony hand thrust from under the robe. His voice was loud, carrying to Wanno and those who waited at the lower step.

"You have done well, Wanno. This one will complete the collection. Take her at once for preparation. The Fire Pool will be active in a short time."

As though in a dream, she heard Wanno.

"You are sure, mighty King, that you wish this one? That she will pass the test of beauty?"

There was something warning in the voice. She watched the King, waiting for him to answer Wanno. The King's lips formed slowly into a sneer. His eyes were half closed.

"Does Wanno wish to judge the beauty of the King's property? Does Wanno think he is a better judge for the forty thrones?"

Silence — deathlike and puzzling. Then Wanno's reply came, low and respectful.

"Wanno is sorry. He had not meant to. . . ."

The King's arm was upraised.

"Then take her to the mistress of the Fire Pool—at once."

She knew that the motion of his arm was meant to dismiss her. She started to turn and her eyes stopped on the girl nearest him. There were many of them, all lovely, yet until now the King's eyes had held her, forbade her to look at anything but him.

She stared at the silent, motionless women. Then her eyes stopped on June Freemont.

"June," her cry was forced, hoarse with fear.

Before they could stop her, she had crossed the short distance to June Freemont's side and her hand was on the girl's arm.

She stood there for a full minute, never moving, hardly daring to breathe. The men behind her made no move to take her away.

She studied the wide, unblinking eyes, the perfection of the girl before her. The flesh under her touch was cold and lifeless. Her eyes left the figure before her and went slowly around the wide circle, stopping momentarily to search for some sign of warmth in the others.

Thirty-nine dead women. The dead court of King Boona.

She was to be the fortieth dead queen.

A scream welled from her lips, but she did not realize what she did. The Temple of Flame vanished as inky

blackness closed about her.

It was Wanno, the Flame Guard, who gathered her limp body from the stone floor and carried her away—to the Mistress of the Flame Pool.

WHEN Jim Winter plunged feet first into the hole in the cavern floor, he half expected to land in some boiling cauldron. This was the entrance to the world of the fire people.

He landed, after an eight foot drop, on a hard stone floor. Painfully he got to his feet and stared about. Above him, fire was already spouting from the walls, shooting upward to the spot he had just left. Over his head, the roof was low. In a distance the cave widened. He went forward discarding the asbestos suit. It was safe enough here, though the cavern was uncomfortably warm.

He came out into a huge, high-roofed cave and saw the Temple of Flame in a distance. Its columns reared upward to the roof of this strange world. Even at a distance, it was evident that the Temple was some huge, very beautiful place of worship. He went toward it, wondering at the barren cave, and the complete lack of life within it.

Close to the Temple of Flame, he stopped short, then sought the shelter of a rock outgrowth. One of the doors had been flung open and men were filing out. Beyond them, he saw the flames that lighted the temple and caught a glimpse of rare, colorful pillars that held up the dome.

His attention focused on the small band of men who were leaving the place. Among them was a tall youth, and in his arms, Winter recognized Florence.

The small procession of men moved away from him, away from the temple, down to the lower levels of the cavern.

He started after them, careful to stay out of sight as much as possible.

They marched for some time, and Winter kept his distance. Then the cavern narrowed into a winding tunnel and it became very dark. After them, around turn after turn, always downward, always to where the heat was more intense.

Then Jim realized why the cave had been so deserted.

The party came out into a lower cavern, and here for as far as he could see, were a series of steaming pools, flanked by low steps and filled with red bathers. He couldn't enter this lower cave, for there was no place to hide. He stayed close to the wall in the tunnel, staring out at the pools. The cavern was at least half a mile long and within it, dozens of separate pools sent steam into the hazy air. Around the pools, men and women lounged, to stare with interest as Wanno carried the earth girl among them.

The people arose slowly, following, clustering around the largest pool. Here no one had bathed. Here the water was boiling, and flames burst upward occasionally, shooting from the surface of the water.

On the edge of this pool, the procession halted. Wanno placed Florence on her feet. The girl staggered and fell against him and he held her up.

Winter watched, not daring to go to her rescue, wondering what would happen next.

"To the Fire Pool," Wanno said in a clear, loud voice, "goes the fortieth queen of Boona. May she always be as lovely."

Winter could hear the words clearly, for the people were silent and the cave carried sound well.

He heard Florence cry out as women came forward and disrobed her. Winter knew that he must act soon.

Wanno picked Florence up and was walking toward the pool that shot flames. Winter started to run. He was

half crazy with anger. He didn't care what happened. He had to try to save the girl.

The next few minutes were dim in his mind. He remembered hitting the tall man in the back with all his weight, just as Wanno was about to toss Florence into the flames. He heard the roar of anger from the red people and felt the man topple backward. Before Winter could stop, he had stumbled and fallen head-long into the steaming pool.

FLORENCE opened her eyes slowly, say Wanno standing above her and closed them again, pretending to sleep.

"You need not be frightened," Wanno said. "You will remain alive as long as I can protect you."

The tone of his voice amazed her. She had never heard anyone speak more tenderly. Her eyes opened quickly, to study his honest, patient face.

"I—I don't understand."

She stared around the tiny room. It was hardly more than five feet square, evidently carved from solid stone. The entrance was a low tunnel. She had been lying on a black, clothlike substance that cushioned her head.

"Do not try to understand me," Wanno said, and sat down beside her on the floor. "You see, this is my own hiding place. I constructed it when I was very small. It has served me many times."

She stared at the warm, scarlet face, and thought that if it were not for his color, the man would be handsome. Memories of the Fire Pool began to flood back. The sudden attack from behind, the fall, in Wanno's arms.

"You were going to destroy me," she said. "Why have you changed your mind?"

He shrugged.

"Boona, King of the Fire People, is very powerful," he said. "Boona demanded your preservation for his fortieth throne. At the pool, the people were so interested in the white man that I was able to slip away with you and escape. It was my first opportunity to escape Boona's wrath."

She didn't hear his last words. White man? Why hadn't she guessed?

"A white man was at the pool?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Somehow he entered the caves of the Fire People and followed us there. He attacked me but slipped and fell into the Fire Pool. He will trouble no one now."

She knew it was Jim Winter. It could be no one else. She tried to keep her voice firm. Tried not to falter.

"What happens to those who fall into the pool?"

Wanno smiled.

"They die," he said simply. "The heat is intense. The Fire Pool has a curious power. It makes the body hard. It preserves it forever. That is why Boona wants his brides dipped in the pool. They remain lovely and he can stare at them for all time. Boona hates age. He loves youth.

Tears sprang into her eyes.

"Then the white man is dead?"

Wanno grinned.

"I didn't remain long, but I believe it was quite obvious," he said. "They search for us now, but they will never find us. When the search dies down, we will escape to the tunnels of the lower people and stay there until Boona forgives."

BOBBY TALMUD was terribly frightened. Since that first night he had descended into the mysterious crater, strange things had happened to the fifteen year old boy. Bobby Talmud was a page in the court of Boona.

For days he had been forced to dress

as the Fire People dressed, and carry vast trays of food to the sour-faced King.

He had done all this because he had no plan for escape and didn't dare defy these strange people who treated him as a small, unimportant animal.

Bobby knew every passage in the Temple of Fire. He spent hours working in the great kitchen over the fire pits and in the hall on his way to Boona's throne.

He knew that the lovely women who sat around the King were not alive. They smiled and looked pretty. They never ate and if you got close to them, you saw horror in the soft eyes, and a rigidness about the face.

The full horror of his position had burst upon Bobby Talmud. Tonight he had entered the temple to find a new Queen. He was staring at her now, the dead eyes, the willowly perfection of June Freemont. June, whom he had loved and who had been with him and Uncle Jim a few nights ago—the thirty-ninth dead Queen of Boona.

Bobby stared for a long time, tears in his eyes, at the body of the girl. The Boona's voice warned him that he must not linger near the thrones, and Bobby Talmud went slowly back to the kitchen —determined to kill the King and escape from this world beneath the black stone.

"THE earth people are gullible," a far away voice said. "Drawn into the stone, they cannot understand that such a place exists."

The voice interested Jim Winter. He was drifting about in mist. The mist cleared gradually and his body seemed to lower itself on a soft cushion that clung to him and held him suspended half in space, half on something solid.

He opened his eyes and saw a vast, darkened room. The walls were black.

The voice was saying:

"This body is of no use to Boona. This earth man isn't exactly beautiful, according to Boona's rating."

A chuckle, evidently from someone other than the man who had spoken.

"A pretty problem, this Fire World," the second voice said. "We might burst out of it and destroy the world."

They both laughed long and hard, as though the idea was pleasing.

"But we cannot disturb Boona," the first said. "Boona would die if he had to leave the Temple of Fire. It is only the heat that tempers his old body. He couldn't stand the upper world."

Footsteps sounded near him, and Winter closed his eyes. He remembered falling into the pool. Now his body was stiff, but he could feel life flowing back into him. He could flex his fingers and toes, though he dared not do so.

"Bathed in the Fire Pool," a voice said very close to his head. "This time, it was no bathing beauty, but an oddly colored upper world man who felt the soothing qualities of Boona's pool. I wonder if his body is preserved? He was lifted from the pool long before the required time had elapsed."

The other chuckled.

"Boona was angry," it said. "Boona wanted to dispose of the corpse at once. He cannot think of a man touching the waters of the pool. It has contaminated the Fire Pool."

"At least, Boona has not captured his fortieth queen."

"Ah," was the answer. "Wanno is a smooth one. He ran away with his prize and will escape among the lower people. No one will tell Boona."

Winter's mind was working furiously. Wanno, the man who held Florence, had escaped. Florence was safe for the time being.

He could hear the clink-clink of instruments. He could flex his arms and

legs. His hips and torso still felt cold and dead. Thank God they had pulled him from the pool before it was too late.

The men were walking toward him. He tensed, hoping his muscles would respond when the time came.

"We shall start with the heart," said the man who had spoken first. "I am interested in the construction, and what might have happened to it under compression."

Under compression? The words puzzled Winter, but so had everything that had happened thus far.

He tensed for the spring. Opening his eyes, he stared upward at the point of a glistening knife.

HE ROLLED over suddenly, heard a cry of amazement, and landed on the floor, bent double. He came up, right fist aimed at the face above him. The blow connected. The knife sprang across the room and clattered against the wall. Winter didn't wait for the second man. The door was close and he dashed through it and down a long tunnel. He knew that an alarm would be given. He rounded the first corner to find that the tunnel ahead was deserted.

Dashing headlong into a small doorway, he connected with someone who cried out in pain and went down beneath his weight.

In that one second, he saw Bobby lying on the floor below him.

"Bobby," he said, unable to believe his eyes.

"Uncle Jim!" the boy's voice was filled with relief. "I was trying to run away—to hide. I'm awfully glad you're here. We've got to find Florence."

He helped the boy to his feet.

"You've seen her? You know where she is?"

Bobby nodded eagerly.

"They say at the court that a guard, Wanno, has stolen her and taken her to the lower people. I know the way."

"And June?"

There was hope in Winter's voice.

Bobby's lip started to quiver. His eyes were bright.

"June is dead," he said slowly. "She's one of the Queens of Boona."

WANNO did not go to the lower people. For many hours he hid in the cave. He dreamed of having the girl for his own, but Wanno was of the Fire People. Now he was banished from the kingdom and he was bitter.

"We are powerful," Wanno told Florence. "We plan the destruction of the world. Now that I am banished from Boona's halls, I cannot escape. If we hid with the lower people, shortly Boona would find and destroy us both. I will not give you up to him."

Florence tried to play the game coolly. With Jim gone, she had one job left. She must find Bobby. If she could not do that, she must attempt to destroy as much as she could of this Fire Kingdom, and then die herself.

She must stay with Wanno until she knew when and how to gain the information she needed to harm Wanno's people.

"Why can't we escape to the upperworld from which I came?" she asked Wanno. "We would be safe from Boona there."

Wanno chuckled.

"Listen," he said, "and I will tell you a story. I am a rogue and a scoundrel. Boona has hated me for many years. I defy him and he knows I am well liked. Therefore, he leaves me alone.

"The Fire Kingdom is concentrated and powerful. Many years ago, earth started to grow hotter inside. The crust will break some day, and the Fire Kingdom will be spread forth above ground to rule the surface. The upper earth

people will be destroyed. Your own books tell you that.

"When the time comes, I was to have been powerful. Now, I will be less than dirt in Boona's eyes.

"I am angry at Boona and yet I cannot escape him. Therefore, you will go with me. I have a plan to destroy the Fire Kingdom and get my revenge. I will die doing something I have longed to do. Punish Boona for his cruelty to me."

The girl shuddered.

"And am I to die with you?"

He nodded, still smiling.

"Don't be sad," he said. "It will be wonderful to destroy Boona."

He picked her up easily and started for the entrance.

"I HEARD Boona tell about the pit," Bobby said. "I was in the throne room one night. He said that when the fire in the pit grew bright, it would burst out and destroy the earth. Then the Fire People would go out on the crust of the earth and rule it. Boona said he would take his queens to the surface and establish his court there."

Jim stood well back from the roaring fire, the boy's hand in his, his mind full of the terror and hopelessness of their situation.

He should be trying to escape. He couldn't leave until Florence was found. Bobby had brought him this way, down the long dark tunnel toward the catacombs of the lower people, and finally, through the heat-ridden chamber of the fire pit.

The pit was sending up a steady, blasting fire that hit the ceiling and mushroomed out over the room. Cold down-drafts saved them from the worst of the heat. The flames flickering against the wall, the steady roar from below, were frightening.

"We'll have to go on," Winter said grimly. "If you think Florence came this way we must find her first. Later, we'll think about what can be done to save ourselves and the others."

He thought of the thousands of people above them, knowing nothing of this destruction, living innocently on top of a raging volcano of death.

Bobby led the way onward past the pit and into another tunnel. Suddenly he halted, drawing Winter behind an outcropping of rock.

"Wait," he whispered. "After you've been here a while you can sense anyone who is close. People are ascending from below."

They waited. Winter could hear voices, then Florence and the tall, red man, Wanno, came into the light of the fire chamber.

They went directly to the edge of the pit. Wanno's voice was clear.

"We will smother the pit with fire blankets," he said. "That was Boona's plan. To do it now will force the flame to seek escape. If it cannot it will blow the kingdom apart."

Winter admired the girl. He could see it in her pale, set face, the small clenched fists.

"Will it destroy us—here—in the chamber?"

Wanno nodded.

"The fire blankets are packed in chests near the wall. They are ready for the great day. We must hurry."

While Winter and the boy hid in the shadows, Wanno led the girl to the wall of the cavern. He opened stone panels and dragged forth huge folded blankets. They stacked them on the edge of the pit. For an hour they toiled, and at last the blankets were piled in a high wall all around the pit. Wanno turned to the girl.

"You will leave first," he said. "When I push the blankets into the pit, the cave will become still and airless. Then

the crust of the world will explode. I could not bear having you here when that happens."

He took her arm firmly.

"Good-by, earth woman."

She stared up at him, her eyes wide with fright.

"You mean you're going to . . . ?"

He chuckled.

"Into the pit with you," he snapped. "I do not fear death. Why should you fear it?"

He started to push her toward the fire.

JIM WINTER left the wall with quick, gliding foot-steps. He was close to them when Wanno saw, and dropped the girl. Wanno pivoted swiftly.

"So the white one wasn't embalmed in the Fire Pool!" he cried.

Winter was on him, both fists flailing. He caught Wanno under the chin, sending him sprawling back toward the wall. With a snarl, Wanno came to his feet and started to run toward Winter. Winter, his back to the pit, waited. Wanno jumped into the air and came down with both feet against Winter's chest. Winter groaned and sank down, almost falling into the blankets that bordered the pit.

He rolled over quickly, caught Wanno's arm and threw him on the floor. While the boy and Florence watched with fascination, Winter twisted the red man over on his back and pinned him down.

Wanno, with one last lunge, worked his way free and rolled out of reach. As he did so, he hit the pile of blankets and both men started to slide. With a scream, he hit the smooth edge of the pit and tried to catch himself. It was too late.

He sank out of sight, and the fire blankets started to slide downward after him. The pit was suddenly filled with a choked rumble.

Winter staggered to his feet and grasped the girl.

"We've got to get out of here," he shouted. "Bobby—follow—up the tunnel."

Behind them, the pit roared a protest against the choking blanket that had fallen down its shaft. For a moment, Winter thought they would escape—that the explosion had been avoided.

Then the walls of the tunnel turned blood red and intense heat surged past them, traveling upward in a hot wind toward the Temple of Flame.

The wall trembled and an explosion rocked the cavern and sent them sprawling on the floor.

None of them heard or felt what followed.

JIM sat up slowly, staring around him. He was safe but very weak. A short distance away, Florence was sprawled on her back, staring upward dully at the star-studded sky. Bobby kneeled at her side.

Winter stood up and moved slowly toward them.

"You all right?" he asked.

She looked at him dully.

"Jim—I don't understand."

He was sitting beside her, smiling.

"I think I do," he said. "We are back in the crater. Home is only a short distance away."

He pointed at the dark rim of the prairie far above them.

"Before us is the rock—the same black rock that dynamite would not move—split wide open."

"And there's no hole beneath it," Bobby Talmud said in a puzzled voice. "How did we get into the world of the Fire People?"

Winter felt much better now. They were safe. Nothing could harm them

now.

"We didn't," he said. "I remember wondering why that stone was so hard. Then I heard the Fire People say that they were curious to know about my heart, as it was 'compressed'. I didn't understand what they meant. Now I think I do. The Fire World wasn't as huge as we thought. Instead of *it* being large, *we* were made very small.

"From somewhere, probably the very center of the earth, a huge rock was forced up. The pressure on it had been so great, that it was harder than any surface we have ever seen.

"People captured us and took us to a strange, new world. Yet, when that world explodes, we find ourselves sitting back on earth, safe and sound. The rock, the one we could not crack, is broken wide open. There is no opening beneath it, no opening through which we might have gone."

"Then the Fire People actually lived within . . . ?"

Florence was beginning to understand.

"The ebony rock," Winter said, "we were forced through an atomic change, and became so small that tiny pits—minute to the point where they would not show in a microscope—were like huge tunnels to us.

"One thing saved us from death. When the explosion came, it released us into our normal surroundings. The air caused us to return to normal size, and the explosion that would have killed us, were we normally as small as Boona and his followers, only served to release us from the Fire Kingdom."

Tears glistened in Bobby Talmud's eyes.

"Aunt June didn't come back," he said.

Winter's eyes were troubled.

"The power of the Fire Pool was real enough," he said. "But June did not suffer. She was dead long before the explosion came. We can be thankful for one thing. The Fire World, which seemed to be a threat to the world's safety, was actually powerless to harm us. The stone was forced up from below by sudden heat that blackened the pit it created. King Boona and his thirty-nine queens are gone, destroyed by the heat Boona thought would end the world."

He stared at the quiet, lovely girl at his side.

"I have Boona's fortieth queen, and he'll never be back to claim her."

THE END

A LONG VOYAGE HOME

By J. NELSON

ONE of the many attempts to produce rubber in the Western Hemisphere and thus make us self-sufficient is the rubber plantation begun by Henry Ford at Belterra, Brazil. Almost four million trees were planted and some are already producing the vital latex. By 1950 the estimated production will be 7,500 tons, but the eventual goal is 38,000 tons each year.

The strange fact about this experiment is that this region supplied the seeds upon which the rubber industry of the East Indies was founded. It was in 1876 that Henry A. Wickham spirited 70,000 seeds of the Hevea tree out of Brazil to England from where they were shipped to Malaya and the East Indies. Here the seeds were planted and thrived until their "descendants" supplied the entire world with rubber. The trees in Brazil, however, were never developed to any important degree.

It took a war to wake us up but our government has great hopes for this huge storehouse of rubber in our own backyard. Perhaps the war will be over before great amounts of latex are realized, but rubber is just as vital in peace as in war and the trees of Brazil will never again be neglected.

INTO THE STRATOSPHERE

IT may have once seemed like only a cartoonist's dream that men could zoom about in the stratosphere, literally hop from one planet to the next—but soon the experiences of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon will be duplicated by real men. Perhaps you will one day find yourself seated in the cabin of a rocket ship en route to Mars; certainly your grandchildren will have that opportunity.

We read in today's newspapers of the use of rocket guns in land and air battles. Outstanding scientists of our time predict flights to other planets for purposes of exploration and some men have gone so far as to speculate on the possibilities of colonizing Mars or Venus.

The shape of man's means of hurtling through space from this planet to another has varied through the years in courageous scientists' imaginations. One of the first ideas ever offered was proposed by Achille Eyraud in 1865. He was thinking of a cannon firmly planted in the ground out of which a ship could be shot into the stratosphere. As ridiculous as Eyraud's idea sounds to modern scientists he did point out the direction in which other men could proceed.

The principle of the rocket is based on the observation that the power of an explosion can move an object. The rocket ship is sent on its way by a series of explosions that follow one another in rapid succession and practically "kick" it along. So you see, the use of a cannon was not too far distant from the real attack to the problem.

Dr. Goddard at Clark University in Massachusetts has made some headway in his sincere effort to discover the best fuel to be used by the ship. With nozzles shooting smokeless powder, he has achieved a velocity equal to 5,500 miles an hour. A world in which man would be able to cover distance at that rate of speed almost defies the imagination.

Smokeless powder is not the answer, however. With the best type of powder available, at least 400 pounds would be needed to speed each and every pound beyond the atmosphere of the earth. Such a load would make stratosphere travel impossible.

Pioneering in his experiments with an entirely new type of fuel, Professor Goddard has turned his attention to liquid oxygen and liquid hydrocarbon. The preliminary test flights at Auburn, Massachusetts, demonstrated the possibilities of this type of fuel. A camera and barometer were shot several hundred feet into the air and landed safely afterwards. In the lonely Libyan desert, Dr. Darwin Lyon, an American scientist, has been testing the possible effects that great speed may have on living creatures. You may have begun to wonder for yourself whether man could live if he were subjected to such high rates of acceleration. Dr. Lyon has used a canary and a mouse to prove that moving at great speed in a rocket is not dangerous to small forms of animal life. The next experiments to be undertaken will involve some of the higher animals such as a dog or monkey, which will give us a more accurate indication of how human beings might react to high speed travel.

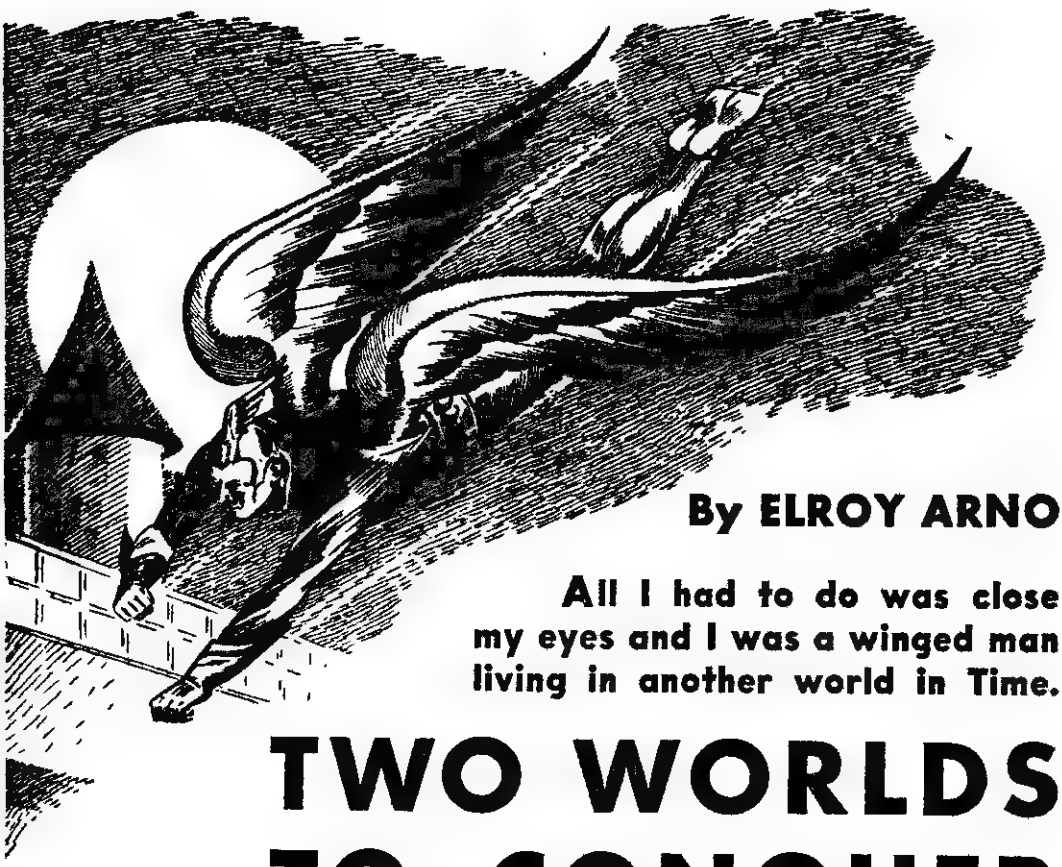
Most of the rockets that have been designed are close in appearance to those used by the newspaper cartoonist in the Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon comic strip. The outer shape resembles a huge torpedo and the inside consists of four major parts. There is the fuel compartment, the combustion chamber in which the fuel is burned, the passenger compartment where instruments and other equipment may be carried, and, finally, the rocket shell itself.

Despite the terrific speeds it can attain, the rocket engine is a simple mechanism. It is much more simple in construction than even the automobile engine. It has no need for a carburetor, piston, magneto, throttle, or any of the other common parts of most engines. Since the rocket engine is so simple in form, there is almost nothing that could get out of order. The steering and navigation could be handled adequately with the same method used by an airplane. The pilot could turn the rocket in space by changing the position of its rudder and ailerons.

Despite the fact that scientists have provided for man's needs by including supplies of oxygen and nitrogen for breathing purposes, the idea of rocket travel has still been opposed on the grounds that the pressures a person would be subjected to while traveling at such a high speed would be too great for him to endure. Dr. Goddard, in comparing the figures he has arrived at through his experiments with the pressures speed motorcyclists encounter in their work, has said in effect: "Human beings have already shown that they can endure the pressure which one can encounter in a rocket. The sensation at the start of a rocket journey would probably be no worse than the pressure one feels when an automobile or an elevator starts or stops abruptly."

It may be hard for the ordinary man, the workman who doesn't trouble himself with the affairs of science, to believe that rocket ships will be in use in the near future. It was just as difficult for him to predict the wide use of the telephone, radio, and airplane. Man has reached every goal he has set for himself except the exploration of space. Scientists are confident that man will conquer that phenomena also, and that one day, not too far away, it will be a common thing for us to go zooming through the stratosphere.—*A. Morris*

There was a rush of wings and down from the sky came a winged man



By ELROY ARNO

All I had to do was close my eyes and I was a winged man living in another world in Time.

TWO WORLDS TO CONQUER

IT SEEMS odd now that about the first time it happened, I blamed it on my imagination—a nightmare of a blacked-out brain. I wish it had been that simple. I was at the controls of a three place Sky Coach, one of the classiest planes available, manufactured by my boss, P. T. Flinnum of Buffalo, New York. Just south of Chicago, I nosed around under a cloud bank looking for a private landing field belonging to Ward Reese. Reese had ordered the Sky Coach and Flinnum asked me to fly it to Chicago.

I had a three thousand foot ceiling and had just spotted the race track on the Reese estate. Flinnum told me Reese's private field was just a quarter mile south of the track and I could make out the single east-west runway. I nosed over a little, looked at the sky below and it was all clear. Then the engine conked out on me, just like that. The Sky Coach is an eighty-five horse job that seldom plays tricks. I wasn't worried, because I had plenty of time and room to set her down. It was just at that moment that this crazy thing happened.

I'd had a headache all morning. I closed my eyes and rubbed one hand across the lids.

They stuck.

I couldn't open my eyes. At the same time I found myself in a very different kind of world. I'll tell it the way it

impressed me, because that's the easiest way. All the time I was conscious of the weight that kept my eyes from opening, and yet I could do nothing about it. I was still Fred Hamilton, six foot three, red hair and feeling quite normal, thank you. Yet, at the same time, I *wasn't* Hamilton. At least, that's the way it seemed. With my eyes closed, I was a complete stranger to myself. My body was clad only in a rugged skin of some kind that was covered by tough scales. It draped around my shoulders and was trimmed neatly at the thighs, leaving me like some kind of a tow-headed Tarzan. Oh yes, I was still flying but not exactly a Sky Coach. I had a pair of wing-like contraptions strapped to my shoulders and I was gliding lazily around above a hot-looking, and very large, desert.

Maybe you don't quite get it. I didn't either, not then. It was one of those half-awake, half-asleep dreams we have sometimes. I was Fred Hamilton in a Sky Coach, and I was some kind of a winged-man gliding around in the air over a desert.

IT DIDN'T make sense. I fought to escape the dream, because I was dully aware that in my sensible life, my plane had dived, levelled off, flown itself a little while and was diving again. If it kept up, I might land much more abruptly than I had planned. At the same time, in the dream I wasn't at all unhappy. The wings strapped to my shoulders were long and tapered gracefully. I kept gliding along with them and after a while I saw a long procession of people straggling across the desert below me. I seemed to know what I was doing, because right away I had the urge to dive down close and look them over.

I folded my wings up neatly around me and shot down like nothing human. It took only a few seconds to see that the caravan was made up of strange-looking animals drawing carts. The carts stirred up a lot of dust.

Ahead of the caravan two milk-white animals galloped along with their riders. At first I thought they were horses. Then as I dipped down I saw that they were more like camels, with three humps on their backs, and an extra set of legs that held up the center of the chassis. A man sat on one of these humpy, six legged creations and he looked pretty worried as I dove toward him. He drew a long sword and started to display it in a manner that made me back away and hover at a respectable distance. The other rider, staying close to the guy with the sword, was a slim, neatly clad girl with a lovely face and the look of a princess about her. Here, I decided, was a babe who knew that she was Class A, and wouldn't let anyone forget it. I was looking them over carefully when the dream started to fade and I remembered that I was a thousand feet above ground in a Sky Coach that had been flying itself for several minutes. I managed to pry open my eyes. It was easy then. I got a grip on the stick, eased it back and went in for a nice landing on Reese's bent-grass runway.

That estate was a nice bit of scenery at that, and my mind slipped away from the dream for a few minutes as I eased the Sky Coach up the taxi strip and turned it around on the lawn before Reese's swimming pool. Two horses were galloping up the cinder strip that came from the woods behind the house. As they came, I took a few seconds to stare around at the hundred-foot tile pool, the terraces of green that came down from the huge, almost palace-like house on the hill. The house was white, and touched off with a tile roof and carefully decorated shutters. Reese already had two planes, and the hangar in

which he housed them looked big enough for half the United States Army. Reese was that kind of a guy, according to Flinnum.

"Reese owns half the real estate in Chi," Flinnum had told me when I left Buffalo. "Treat him like Gosh-almighty. He's got the dough to buy us out."

That was a pretty good-sized statement, considering that Sky Coach Inc. had about sixteen million in the bank.

I GOT out of the plane, found a rag and was polishing a spot where the engine had been throwing oil since Buffalo. I had just finished rubbing when the two horses snorted up and I heard someone shout.

"Is that the plane I ordered from Sky Coach?"

I turned around, remembering that I was supposed to be nice and treat Mr. Reese like he was—well, you know.

I said: "If your name is Reese, this is the plane."

I heard him snort and it didn't sound a lot different than the noise of his horse had made a minute before. I guess my eyes opened a little wider than they ever had before. I stood there, the grease rag still in my hand, staring up at the pair on the horse.

Remember that dream?

Well, I sure did. This guy Reese, and the pale-faced girl in riding breeches who sat near him were splitting images of the pair I'd seen riding six-legged camels while I plummeted around the sky in that whacky dream I'd been having. Odd part of it was, *I'd never seen Reese or his daughter before.*

I scratched my head and succeeded in looking very bewildered about the whole thing. Meanwhile, Reese climbed down off his horse and a flunky came running across the lawn and relieved him of the beast. Reese came over and ran his hand across the wing of the Sky Coach. Then he looked at his hand, as though he was afraid he'd find some dust on it. I'd say that Reese would weigh in at about two hundred, and he had a small moustache that wriggled when he talked and looked like something that should have been washed off when he took his last bath.

"Nice job," he said, and I felt like thanking him for putting his stamp of approval on a plane that sold ten thousand copies a year.

"Yes," he added, "I think I'll like it. Of course you plan to stay until I've picked up the necessary pointers to fly the thing?"

I hadn't planned anything like that. I told Flinnum I'd be back the following day. Then I remembered the six-legged camels and the dream of the strange desert. When I put two and two together, I didn't get anything. That made me curious about the whole set-up. I looked straight at the girl on the horse and her nose went up three notches and turned to the windward.

"Yeah," I said. "Yeah, I'll stick around."

"Good." Reese didn't rub his hands together, but he acted as though he might at any minute. "Good. We'll make arrangements for you. Meanwhile, put her into the hangar. My mechanic will show you where everything is."

The hangar had everything, including hot and cold running showers. I had one on the house, ate lunch with Pete Flemish, Reese's mechanic, and ended up dangling my bare feet in the swimming pool. Reese had sent word to Flemish that I could sleep at the hangar and he'd call me the first thing next morning. He was anxious to get checked out in the Sky Coach.

I knew of Flemish. He had washed out of two outfits and been grounded on

three separate occasions. I hadn't heard anything of him during the past three years, but I didn't like his record.

I wasn't in any hurry. I kept dangling my toes in the million-dollar pool until the moon came up and it started to get cold. Then I went in and found the bed Flemish had made up for me in the neat little room behind the hangar. I fell asleep, dreaming of six-legged camels dangling their toes in swimming pools, and of Ward Reese getting stuck in the door of the Sky Coach and having to stay there until I could come along with a pair of wings strapped on my shoulders and pull him out.

It was all beautifully confusing.

CHAPTER II

Girl in Pink Pajamas

I DON'T know what awakened me. I was sitting up in bed suddenly, and after looking around I decided it wasn't morning. It wasn't noisy and it wasn't like me to open my eyes in the middle of the night with my heart pounding like a trip hammer. With these facts compiled carefully in my sleepy brain, I decided that something very unusual had awakened me. I usually sleep like a bear in hibernation. I didn't like it. The hangar was too darn quiet. The night was too quiet. I slipped into my trousers and shoes. It was warm and I didn't need more clothing to keep me comfortable. I went out of the bedroom that opened directly into the hangar. Flemish had another room identical to mine right next door. It was open. That might have meant something, and probably it didn't. I moved across the hangar counting the noses of the ships as I went. Reese's two planes were here. The Sky Coach was gone. Reese couldn't fly it. At least, I didn't think he could. Flemish might.

I went out into the moonlight. It was very bright. Everything looked shiny and almost white under the light from the sky. No one was in sight. No one? I saw a small figure detach itself from the shadows near the house and move across the lawn toward me. I was a quarter of a mile away, but from where I stood it looked like a girl. Reese's daughter?

I didn't have time to guess. At that moment, two sharp jagged sparks of orange flame shot from the upper story of the house and the girl on the lawn slipped and fell forward on her face. I heard the sound of the gun-shots a split second later.

I was on my way, and I'm not bad in a sprint. Someone was taking pot-shots at the girl, and I didn't like that. It took me nothing flat to get to the girl. She wasn't Reese's daughter. She was a far prettier dish. She was slim with dark hair curling around her throat. She wore a pair of pink pajamas, not exactly the type of clothing you'd expect a vision to wear when wandering about the lawn.

This kid was in trouble. Maybe the same person who had fired at her was still up there somewhere getting ready to pot-shot at us both. I rolled her over gently but didn't have the heart to give her a very thorough examination. Hamilton tries to be a gentleman, even when it hurts. I decided that she hadn't been hit. The grass was wet. She had slipped, fallen head first and knocked herself out cold. I couldn't very well take her away to some hidden cave. I started back toward the house with her in my arms.

AFTER a minute she opened her eyes and I felt her stiffen in my arms. She started to struggle and her eyes, very blue and full of life, were flashing

with anger.

"Let me down!" Her voice was low but she said it with so much anger inside her that I almost dropped her. I didn't. I said:

"I'm your pal. I don't know what happened to you and I don't care. It's not going to happen again tonight."

Reese came out on the front porch. He was dressed in his pajamas but had shoes and socks on.

"Why, Miss Halsey," he said, and what his little eyes did to those pink pajamas was misery. "What on earth—?"

"There was someone in my room." I had placed the girl on her feet, but she still leaned on me for support. Maybe I just imagined it, but it seemed as though she was depending on me a little. "I—I ran out to escape, Mr. Reese. I'm going to leave here."

She blurted out that last line as though her heart was breaking.

Reese's daughter came out. She wore a long robe all spangled with silver and she made a cool, moon-queen picture in it.

"Your imagination, Miss Halsey, is becoming very unfunny."

There was ice in Miss Reese's voice.

The Halsey kid stiffened and I thought she was going to lash out with something nasty. She didn't. She held herself in check.

"Imagination perhaps," she said quietly, "but I've had enough of it. I'll leave in the morning."

She turned to me.

"I'm—I'm sorry we had to meet like this. I'm not quite up to any more conversation. Thanks—and good night."

"Sure," I said. I watched her go inside. Reese and his daughter stayed put.

"See here, Hamilton," Reese said, "that young woman is crazy. She's Wanda's secretary. Wanda has treated her very decently. No one has tried to harm her."

He was sounding me out. He wanted to know what *I* knew. I wasn't falling for that stuff.

I shrugged.

"It's nothing to me," I said. "The young lady fell down out on the lawn and she was hurt. I happened to be wandering around. Hot night. Couldn't sleep. Couldn't just let her lay there."

Reese grinned.

"Don't blame you," he said. "Not a bad picture in pajamas."

I WANTED to smash his fat face. I didn't intend to give up what little I had found out that easily. If people were around firing guns at Miss Halsey, I intended to stay at least long enough to see her safely away from this nuthouse.

"I'm going to bed," I said. "See you in the morning."

"Good," Reese said. "We'll fly about noon. Looks like a clear day ahead."

Wanda had already gone back into the house. Reese wandered after her. I went down the lawn until I got myself behind an outgrowth of heavy bushes. I crouched down and waited. I was a heck of a long way from being tired. I figured if anything else happened tonight I would be close enough to help the Halsey girl. In a way Reese had been right. She *was* a nice picture. One of the nicest and most wholesome-looking I'd viewed in my life.

I wondered who had fired those two shots and who had taken the Sky Coach. Flemish wasn't back yet.

He didn't come in until five in the morning. He cut his engine at two thousand and glided into the field as silently as a ghost on rubber tires. It was evident that I wasn't supposed to know that the Sky Coach flew that night, so I decided to forget all about it for the present. At seven o'clock I

made up my mind that the Halsey kid would be safe while I caught a few winks. When I hit the bed, I went out like a light. Flemish called me at nine. He was grinning when he jerked the sheet off me.

"Climb out, Hamilton," he said. "My gosh, man, anyone could fly right through your room without turning you over. I never saw such a heavy sleeper."

He didn't know the half of it—I hoped.

CHAPTER III

It's Done With Mirrors

I MET an odd character. His name was Sealey Watson. It was just after ten o'clock. Reese sent word that he didn't plan to fly. Miss Halsey, he said, wanted to leave today and he was driving her to Chicago. I could loaf around the estate and if I wished, try the other two planes to see what they could do.

I had flown models like Reese's and had no interest in them. I felt more like lazing around and keeping an eye on the house. I hated to see Miss Halsey leave but I intended to see her safely away before I did anything special.

I found a large canvas-covered chair by the pool. I turned it so that I could keep the house in sight. After a while a car came around and Reese came out. A girl followed carrying two suitcases. It was, I thought, Jean Halsey carrying all her earthly belongings back to Chicago and away from the unwelcome atmosphere of Reese's estate. How wrong I was didn't occur to me until some hours later. Then it was too late to save her from the hell both of us would go through.

The car left and I closed my eyes.

"You look downright comfortable," a voice said.

I LOOKED around and an old codger was hobbling across the grass toward me. He used a heavy hand-carved cane and he leaned on it heavily, dragging a bad leg behind him. He looked like something out of the old people's home, except that he smiled easily and his face, framed in a white beard, was tinged with good color.

"I'm doing all right," I said and stretched. "Pull up a chair."

He chuckled because there wasn't a chair in sight. He dropped the cane and flopped down on the grass.

"I allus kinda liked it here by the pool," he said. I thought his voice sounded a little wistful. "Mr. Reese lets me come over here and sit."

He wanted me to know that he wasn't trespassing.

"My name's Sealey Watson," he went on. "I live right next door. Don't get much work done anymore. Dig around Mr. Reese's garden a little for him. Most the time I just sit and think."

That sounded all right to me. I felt lazy myself and Watson seemed to be all right.

"Reese's a pretty good scout, isn't he?" I asked casually.

Watson was silent for a minute, staring at me in a speculative manner. Then he said:

"Treats me fine."

I grinned.

"Treat everyone the same way?"

Watson wasn't having any. If he knew anything he was going to keep it a dark secret.

"Darn nice day, ain't it?" he said.

I agreed that it was. I stared up at the sky and closed my eyes again. It hit me like all the bricks in the Empire State Building. When my eyelids closed, I was lifted right out of the world and thrown smack into that strange desert sky. Once more I had wings strapped to me and I was flying down, down to-

ward a strange white-walled city.

"Hey," I said, "wait a minute."

IT WAS no use. Watson was gone. The world was gone. I tried to open my eyes but I couldn't. It was even different than yesterday. Yesterday I was conscious of both worlds, and fighting to get back into my own. Today the spell was more complete. Almost at once I was at home in the sky. I had forgotten the earth and old Sealey Watson. Forgotten—everything.

I flew steadily toward the walled city. It was very tiny, laid out against the red sands below me in a pattern that a child might trace on the beach. I was conscious of my own strength. My chest seemed to expand and fill with clear air. Anger stirred inside me. I was going to fight. Going to fight for something very dear to me.

Yet I faced the puzzle of not knowing what or how. You must *think*, I told myself.

You were above the desert once before. You flew down toward a caravan and you found two people you hated.

Then I knew. I knew everything as clearly as though some old well of knowledge, laying deep in my brain, had suddenly overflowed and flooded my everyday life.

I was flying toward the Mighty City. I was flying to save one person from the slave mill.

I circled the Mighty City, studying the walls and the many guards who patrolled them.

I wasn't frightened of the walls or of the guards. They had not seen me. I would be a speck in the sky. I would dive—*now*.

Easily I turned my arms and folded the wings around my body. I shot down like a plummeting eagle, and my eyes adjusted themselves as swiftly as a bird's eyes. The city flew upward. I chose a roof top near the Palace of Starn. Don't ask me how I knew these things. They were born in me. They were part of my knowledge, a double knowledge of a double life.

I landed on the red tile of the palace roof. Below me in the courtyard was a huge, square block. About the block were clustered the greedy slave buyers. The aged, horrible men of the Mighty City who dealt in flesh of the desert people. My mind was suddenly filled with intense hatred for them. Clad in their rich robes, they shouted and screamed with delight as handsome desert men and childish girls were dragged on the block and sold.

THEN before anyone saw me, I saw the girl. I knew her as though I had known her all my life. Her name was Jean of Suba, and I was a dweller of the Suba valleys.

Her figure was lithe and perfect. She was clad in a brief slave apron. I gathered my strength and shot downward, straight at the slave block. I heard the scream of the crowd and the cries of fear.

"The winged man of Suba. Kill the winged man of Suba."

I reached the girl and grasped her in my arms. Then something hit me a terrific blow and I lost consciousness.

When I awakened, I was in a tiny dark room and an aged man stared down at me with patient twinkling eyes.

"You are fortunate to be alive, my son." His voice was soft and gentle. "In the riot that followed your arrival in the Mighty City, I managed to drag your wounded body from the courtyard."

I stared around at the small comfortless room.

"Where am I?"

I was angry. My body was bruised. My head ached furiously.

The sage smiled.

"You are hidden in the palace wall," he said. "No one knows the hiding place of John the Aged."

I knew that I must do one thing. To escape this nightmare, I must open my eyes. Odd, I thought, to have an idea like that. Were not my eyes open now? Could I not see? Was I not the winged man of Suba?

Still, my other self struggled, and at last, slowly, I managed to get my eyes open.

I WAS lying in the chair on the lawn of Reese's estate. I was staring with wondering eyes at old Sealey Watson, still sitting on the grass, his cane beside him. But this time Sealey Watson meant more to me than before. Sealey Watson was also John the Aged, who had saved my life in that other world. I knew something else, also. I knew that Jean Halsey had not left Reese's home that morning. She was still here, held prisoner, for in that other world of mine, Jean Halsey was Jean of Suba, the slave girl I had tried to rescue and failed.

I rubbed an arm across my eyes.

"You've been asleep," Sealey Watson said quietly. "I didn't have the heart to bother you."

I was suspicious of him. Of that worldly wise smile of his.

"How long?" I asked.

He hunched his shoulders.

"Oh about twenty minutes, I guess. I'm not much at keeping track of time."

I wasn't going to let him get away that easily.

"Did you ever hear of Suba?" I asked. "Or of the Mighty City or of John the Aged?"

His amazement was so genuine that I felt like a fool for saying what I had.

"I—I don't think I ever have," he said.

I guess my face turned a little red.

"Had a damned nightmare," I said. "You were in it."

He stood up with some difficulty and reached for his cane.

"Well, I'm off to a good start," he said. "Gave you a nightmare the first time I met you. Better luck next time. See you again."

I stood up while he hobbled away.

"Make it soon," I urged. "I don't always go to sleep and insult my guests."

"I'll be back," he called over his shoulder. "Don't need urging to come over and keep you company. Say 'hello' to Mr. Reese for me."

There was an ugly parallel somewhere between my dream life in Suba and what was going on at Ward Reese's home. I couldn't quite get the drift between the slave business and Jean Halsey, but I would before I finished.

I was beginning to wonder if I had been dreaming, or if it were possible for a man to actually live two separate lives, visiting each world under certain odd circumstances.

Either way, I knew I would go back to Suba. Dream or no dream, Jean of Suba needed my help. I guess it was sort of done with mirrors, or something just as screwy. Two lives with the same characters, all screwed around and dressed in different clothing. A double feature that I didn't like, didn't dare to share with anyone else, and had no idea of shirking.

Fred Hamilton was due to be a very busy young man.

CHAPTER IV

Decision

SEALEY WATSON had been gone for an hour. After he left I decided to beard the lion in his den. I went up

to the house and rang the bell. A very tough-looking butler came to the door. He was a cross between a pug and a gentleman's gentleman. He doubled up like a jack knife and invited me inside.

"You may wait in the library, Mr. Hamilton," he said. "Miss Reese wants to speak to you."

"But I don't want to speak to Miss Reese," I said. "I want to speak to Miss Halsey."

He looked surprised, but not too surprised. A scowl creased his forehead.

"Miss Halsey left this morning." His voice wasn't as polished this time. He sounded nasty. "You should have known that."

I should have, because that was just what Reese wanted to think. I wasn't having any.

"Oh," I said. "Well, Miss Reese will do, as second best. Where's the boss?"

"Oh! The boss, he's—"

The butler had started to speak of Reese in a very un-butlerish manner, but he caught himself.

"*Mr.* Reese stayed in Chicago," he said. "We expect him back tonight."

Wanda Reese came drifting down the hall in a thing that was pale blue and very thin. I wouldn't have recommended it for a cold night. She had enough make-up on to face Hollywood. Her smile was a little artificial.

"I'm so glad you came up, Mr. Hamilton," she said. I wouldn't have called her voice gush-gush, but it wasn't far from it. "I want to try that new plane. Will you check me out?"

That was my job, and I said so.

Ten minutes later I had pushed the Sky Coach out on the apron before the hangar and had the motor warmed up. She came down from the house in a pair of slacks that were meant to knock me flat. I'll admit that the girl had the chassis but I still didn't like the paint job. She had a pasty skin that just doesn't take with me. I strapped her in, showed her a few instruments that were set up slightly different than other models and climbed in myself.

THE runway was smooth. I have a habit of watching six directions at once when I'm flying. Up, down, and all around the compass. At three thousand I levelled off and told her to take over. Wanda Reese was a good flyer. She made a few forty degree turns, a couple of engine stalls and then sent the Sky Coach down into a spin.

As we came out of it, that habit of mine to keep the world in sight paid off. A big plane, probably a four-passenger job scooted into Reese's private port. It had been flying close to the ground and I spotted it only once against the green of the runway. Then it was gone and I couldn't see it again, even after it supposedly would have had time to land.

Right after that Wanda decided she had had enough. I let her land the plane but I had a good idea why she had wanted to fly. Her old man wanted me out of the way for a while that afternoon. Why? I'm not sure. I *was* sure that I wasn't supposed to see that plane land, and that the spin had come just when Wanda decided that I might have a chance to spot it. Where did it go? I didn't know. I probably wouldn't find out. It would have been possible for it to land for a few minutes and take off again before we landed.

EVENTS had been piling up too rapidly for even myself. I stretched out on the bed, the lights out, listening to the night sounds that came through the open window, I tried to think things out, but darned if I could. My mind was a hopeless tangle of broken bits of adventure. None of them made sense.

"Listen, Fred," I said aloud. "Take it all from the beginning. Get it lined up in an orderly fashion and see what you've got."

First came the crazy nightmare I had had in the plane. I would have classified it as a dream and let it go at that, but one detail could not be forgotten. When I first met Ward Reese and his daughter Wanda, *I had already seen them before riding camels on the Suban desert.* After that, I couldn't be sure. I saw Jean Halsey and Sealey Watson *before* my second dream. Did that mean anything?

A fly buzzed around my nose and I swatted at it.

What was going on at the Reese house? Jean Halsey was still at the house, or was she? If I broke in and didn't find her, I'd be in a heck of a spot with Reese. If I did find her, what could she tell me? Reese was running some sort of a crazy business, and it wasn't real estate. His mechanic and pilot, Flemish, had a police record. Strange planes landed secretly and disappeared again.

How did my imaginary Mighty City fit in with Reese and his work? It wasn't reasonable to think that Reese was a slave buyer of any type. That didn't fit.

As I pondered these questions, they made less and less sense. I had been looking up at the darkened ceiling, and each time I winked, a flash of light, gradually brighter and brighter, seemed to hit my eye-balls. It hit for that split second when the eye was covered by the lid, then the darkness of the room returned when they opened again.

"Hamilton," I said, "you've always been a normal man in every respect. No liquor, no bad living, not even a very good imagination. This is all darn screwy. Don't believe it."

I started to blink faster. Light, dark, light, dark. I kept my eyes closed a little longer this time.

Suba.

Suba was no nightmare. Suba was real. This, the third time I visited Suba, would prove that to me.

In explaining what happened, the transition between *world* and *Suba* is so abrupt that it is difficult to get across the terrific shock of the change.

From now on I would be on the verge of returning to Suba every hour I was awake. Every time my eyelids closed and my body did not seek rest, I would go from this world to another—Suba.

How did I know that then?

I WAS in the tiny room with John the Aged. I had evidently not left that room since I tried to save Jean of Suba. I was lying on a rough plank bed, my wings wrapped tightly about me, my body in pain. I listened to John as he talked in a soothing voice. I was learning.

"You were not here for a while," he said. "Your body remained but your mind seemed to drift away and your body rested without it. Let me tell you, winged man, you have a great battle ahead."

It all seemed normal to me. I was a man with a past. I had to learn that past or I could not know what I fought for.

"Go on," I said. My voice was cool and commanding.

"You are a man of dual lives," John said. "A man who lives at once on the normal plane, called earth or world, and a man who lives on the seventh plane—Suba.

"What manner the gods used to transport you from one place to another I do not know. I know that you are confused, and that you must be made to understand your duties. That is why you will listen closely."

I sat up, leaning on one elbow. I was amazed even now to find the tough, sinewy body I owned on this, the seventh plane. I was dark, almost bronze, and the leather thongs that held the wings to my body were wide and bound tightly to the tough flesh. This was probably where my wings belonged.

"I'll listen."

"Good," John smiled. It was Sealey Watson's smile, I thought, and I wondered. "You are the winged man of the desert. That is not mysterious. For some reason, you were given the secret of flight. Who made the wings you wear I don't know. You have worn them since youth.

"The Suban plane is your home, and from there the men of the Mighty City bring the cream of our people and sell them to the filthy scum who bow to the King. One man alone has a weapon to destroy that practice of slavery. You and your wings."

Very nice, I thought. How?

"I'm not sure I believe all this," I said. "I'm not sure that this isn't a dream and that you might be—Sealey Watson."

John stared at me.

"You have been aware of certain things from the first, have you not? You have had knowledge that you belonged here. It did not amaze you when you found yourself over the desert?"

"No," I said, "but dreams are like that. They seem quite natural at the time they happen. Afterwards—" I shrugged.

He smiled.

"Call it dream or what you will," he said. "I have saved you once and I have told you what you must do. As to how you do it?" He arose and walked up and down the small room. "Destroy King Starn and his daughter. Then the people of Suba will be left free to live their own lives. They fear only the King. They would never allow themselves to be sold into slavery if it were not for him."

"And if I don't? If I call this a screwball nightmare and open my eyes and leave it?"

He shook his head. He looked very solemn then.

"Yesterday you tried to save the girl, Jean of Suba. She is in the palace now.

Jean of Suba? Jean Halsey? In the palace?

"What have they done to her?"

"Princess Starn, daughter of King Starn, has taken her for her personal handmaiden. The Princess loves to wield the whip. She has killed a dozen maids with her whip. You were ready to fight yesterday. Something in your mind forced you to fight. Is that will gone today? Would you allow Jean of Suba to die at the hands of Princess Starn?"

Jean of Suba or Jean Halsey, I didn't care which. It seemed that destiny had given me a double quarrel all the way through. I stood up. I felt strong and ready to fight an army.

"How do I find my way into the palace?"

CHAPTER V

Never Hit a Lady

JOHN took me along a narrow passageway through the wall and left me alone at a small, stone panel that would lead me into the halls of the palace of the Mighty City.

"Be careful that no one sees you come or go this way," he cautioned me. "If I am discovered, my value to you will be gone abruptly."

I waited until I was sure the wall was deserted, for there was a small crack near the top of the panel through which I could see. I pushed the panel open and stepped into the hall.

"Go left," John had said. "Sixteen doors will lead you to death. The seventeenth will lead you to the Princess' chambers."

I went softly, silently. Fourteen—fifteen—sixteen—then a wide, gold inlaid panel. I pushed it open and sunshine hit my face. I staggered back, for I had been in the darkness for many hours.

The room in which I found myself was huge. It must have been forty feet from end to end and windowless openings led to a balcony. I looked around hurriedly. Voices came from the balcony. I knew that I must hide at once or be discovered. There was a huge bed near the far wall. I ran across the room and dropped to my knees behind the bed.

Princess Starn came into the room. She was followed by the girl I had tried to save yesterday—or was it a century ago? I didn't know.

The Princess could have been Wanda Reese, for she looked the same, save for the flowing silken robe and emerald headdress. Her face was crimson with rage. Need I say that the girl in the scanty slave dress who followed her from the balcony was a thousand times more attractive than the Princess herself? This was Jean of Suba who I had for a reason unknown even to myself tried to get myself killed for a few hours before.

"You are like the others," the Princess said coldly. She came directly toward the bed, stopped at a chest near the wall and lifted the cover. She drew out a long five tailed whip. "If you scream, I warn you that my father will throw you to the beasts of the arena. Suffer quietly, and as you deserve."

She turned on the girl and raised the whip.

"But I have done no harm," Jean of Suba protested. Her face was calm. I marvelled at that, for she didn't flinch. Her cheeks were bright with color.

"You did no harm?" The Princess' voice was higher now, almost hysterical. "You have torn the hem to my robe and you say you did no harm. I should kill you."

She lashed out with the whip.

I SAW those five thongs hit and bite into the soft flesh of the servant girl's waist. Fortunately her dress protected her from the full force of the blow.

I leaped across the bed with a furious beating of wings. I heard the Princess scream with fear and saw her white, upturned face as she pivoted to face me. I was filled with blind fury. I snatched the whip from her nerveless hand and brought it down across her shoulders.

It didn't seem melodramatic at the time, for I stood there looking at the bloody welts I had torn in the flesh of her shoulders.

"You will never wield the whip again," I said. "You have made the mistake of meeting the winged man of Suba."

The slave girl stood there, hands at her sides, tears streaming down her face.

"Nars," she said in a broken voice. "Nars, you have come back."

I took two hesitant steps toward her and she held out her arms.

"You know my name? Is Nars my name?"

She smiled suddenly through her tears.

"Nars—you have not forgotten. You came yesterday and I knew you would return."

I was close to her and her arms went about my neck. Then, as her lips sought mine, her body stiffened. I heard the throaty cry of fear that parted her lips and saw the stark horror in her eyes. I whirled around, grasping the whip, wondering what was coming.

In the doorway stood King Starn, rugged, forbidding, a huge cross-bow poised in his hands.

"You have come too close to the trap, winged man," he shouted. "It has closed on you."

"Open your eyes, you fool," I told myself.

The bow sang a song of death but as it did, I threw Jean to one side and fell forward.

Open your eyes.

I tried. Oh God, how I tried, and then it happened. I had opened my eyes and the Mighty City was gone.

I WAS standing outside the hangar among the trees near the pool. Jean Halsey stood at my side, sobbing as though her heart would break, her cheek pressed against my chest. In my hand, I gripped a heavy riding whip. Wanda Reese lay on the grass a few feet away, and across her shoulders where the backless gown did not hide them, were long red welts.

Jean was trying to speak.

"Fred, she tried to kill me. She was whipping me for trying to escape. She had me locked in my room."

I brushed my hand across my eyes, trying to acclimate myself to what had happened.

Wanda was all right. She was crying loudly, and swearing at me.

Suba, I thought. Suba, in a new setting. I had beaten a Princess and the King had come to revenge her.

Suddenly I was tense, waiting. Waiting for that last act that would make the scene complete. Where was Reese?

I heard the underbrush crackle and I stood still. Jean stayed close to me.

Ward Reese rushed into the clearing. The scowl on his face told me that I was in a tough spot. He held a pistol in his hand.

"What the hell goes on here?"

I grinned wryly.

"You win," I said. "Enter the King and exit the hero."

He stared at me and I don't blame him for being bewildered. He saw Wanda, and the whip I held in my hand. Blank rage turned his face an ugly red.

"It's time you learned a few things you don't know, Hamilton," he said coldly. "Face the house—and march."

He didn't frighten me much. I was still too bewildered to worry.

"King Starn gives the command. His subjects obey," I said icily. I helped Jean with one arm around her waist and we marched.

CHAPTER VI

Two Worlds Are One

I EXAMINED every inch of the room carefully, but there was no way to escape. It was about fifteen by twenty, furnished luxuriously, with an adjoining bedroom. It had everything in it from soup to nuts—writing-desk, bed, comfortable chairs. This was where Reese, still violently angry, locked Jean Halsey and me. This was evidently to be our apartment from now until he decided what to do with us. I realized that I hadn't been exactly a gentleman to whip Wanda Reese. But I would have done it again if I had caught her whipping Jean. That's the way things were now, and double life or not, I loved Jean in both worlds. Another thing troubled me greatly. Jean and I had been here alone for over an hour. Every second since I had come back to world to save Jean Halsey, I had been on the verge of returning to Suba. It was easy now, for every time my eyes closed, Suba flashed into my life. When they opened, I was once more locked in the suite in Reese's home.

We were sitting opposite each other

near one of the barred windows. The bars were small but very tough. I hadn't even noticed them from the lawn. Here, they were very much in evidence.

"Wanda may be a fool," I said, "but she should know enough not to beat a person in this day and age."

Jean had a lot of spunk, but the Reese girl was taller and stronger than she. It hadn't been an even battle.

"She did though," Jean said ruefully. "If you hadn't come. . . . "

"Which reminds me," I said, "just when did I pitch into the battle?"

Her eyes widened.

"But of course you're fooling," she said. "You certainly know what happened. They locked me up yesterday after you left me. I managed to escape today when Wanda brought up some food for me. She chased me half way to the hangar."

Jean shuddered.

"The girl must be crazy. She screamed for me to come back. Then she caught up with me. I was trying to reach you at the hangar. I stumbled and fell. She struck me three times before I could get up. That was when you found me."

"Of course," I said. "And what did I do?"

I know she thought I was crazy, but I didn't care. I could explain later.

"Why—why you took the whip away from Wanda and hit her with it, she said. "I—I couldn't blame you. I know you were awfully angry."

"I was," I admitted. "But not for the reason you thought. I'm going to tell you something that sounds absolutely impossible. When I've finished, you can tell me so. Perhaps it will explain some things that you are wondering about."

She was puzzled. I couldn't blame her.

"About those odd questions you've been asking?"

I NODDED. "I'm leading a double life," I said, and I told her the whole story of Suba from beginning to end. When I had finished, I leaned back in my chair and sighed. It was a relief to get it off my chest.

"Now," I said, "you can call the paddy wagon and send me away to the home on the hill. I feel better."

To my amazement she seemed to believe. She stared at me for some time. When she spoke, she did it very softly.

"You—fell in love with Jean of Suba?"

"I did," I admitted. "You see, that other life, the one on Suba, seems to be all figured out in advance for me. I do certain things mechanically. Jean of Suba seems to fit in. She calls me 'Nars,' and seems to know all about me."

Her eyes remained soft and calm. I can't quite explain, but her eyes seemed misty and deep, like two pools that were about to absorb me.

"You say that Reese, Wanda, all the others, are there in the other life?"

"Yes."

"And they seem to have the same character—the same personality that they do here?"

"Yes," again.

"I'd like to think—" she stammered, hesitated and her face turned red.

"I mean," she continued, "that I'd like to have 'Nars' for my protector. He sounds very romantic, flying about the sky with his leather wings."

I guess it was my turn to blush, if I still knew how.

"Nars is a little corny, I'm afraid," I admitted. "You see, I'm not the hero type. Nars seems to be a dream guy who possesses a lot of the stuff I'd like to have and haven't got."

We sat there for some time. Then Jean rose and walked over to the window. Her back was turned toward me.

"I believe everything you've told

me," she said at last. "Somehow, fate has chosen to split you into two persons. How, will probably remain a mystery. You are actually living in two worlds at once. You see one normally, and you see the other when this world is cut off from your vision. When are you going back to Suba?"

It sounded so damned idiotic that I chuckled.

"I guess I'll have to figure out a way to get out of here first," I admitted. "We aren't just going to sit here and let Reese have his way, are we?"

She turned and I saw fire in her eyes.

"I hate Reese," she said. "I hate his daughter. They're—they're not human. They are beasts."

"Just how much do you know about Reese and his business?"

It was time I found out. I hadn't done much so far but dream.

She shook her head.

"Nothing. Two weeks ago he advertised for a private secretary for Wanda. I came down here and found out that what she really wanted was a personal maid. I needed the job so I stayed. I was happy enough until the day you came."

"And what happened the day I came?"

SHE came back and sat down. I offered her a cigarette and helped her light it. Her hands were trembling.

"I'm not sure. I went down to dinner. I usually eat with the Reeses. There were a dozen men at the table. I had never seen them before. They said insulting things to Wanda and me. They told stories. Wanda didn't seem to mind. She liked them and laughed with them. I wanted to leave the table but I didn't dare. They all looked like gangsters. I—I think I recognized one of them."

"And who was it?"

I was beginning to feel like a private detective questioning a suspect.

"Jules Waterman," she said.

I shook my head.

"Guess again," I said. "Jules Waterman is in the pen. Been there for five years on a murder charge. He'll still be there when his beard is long and white."

Her faced turned very pale.

"But Fred—Mr. Hamilton—"

I liked that. "Make it Fred," I urged. "From now on, you're Jean."

She smiled. "Fred—you haven't seen today's papers. Waterman broke out of prison. He hasn't been located."

"Uh-huh," I said slowly. It was beginning to make sense. "I've been cut off from the world. Too lazy to look at a paper. You're sure it was Waterman?"

"I'm not *sure*," she admitted. "But—after I left the table I was frightened. That night I tried to escape and someone shot at me from upstairs. You saw that."

I had seen it. Someone certainly didn't want Jean Halsey to leave.

"After they took me back into the house, Waterman talked with Reese. I heard him tell Reese that I was too pretty a bird to let out of the cage. Then they locked me up."

It made beautiful logic. Waterman hiding out with Reese. Perhaps some of Waterman's gang. But why? Reese had plenty of dough. Did Waterman have something on him?

"You've told me enough," I said, and I tried to sound confident and sure of myself. "Now leave it up to me. I'll get us out of here somehow. We know each other's stories. I guess we understand each other."

She had taken two or three puffs on her cigarette. Now she laid it in the ash tray.

"Fred," she said uncertainly. "I'm

not a coward, but I'm darn glad you came when you did. I've never been so frightened in my life."

She wasn't too far away from me then, and I lifted her out of her chair and held her in both arms.

"Jean of Suba," I said, and it sounded romantic. "From now on you can consider yourself the personal property of Nars, the winged wonder. If I catch anyone harming a hair of your head, I'll kill him."

She put both arms around my neck and kissed me. Everything would have been all right if her kiss hadn't been so sweet.

I closed my eyes tightly and tasted her lips.

With my eyes closed, Suba flashed before me and I was standing in the great hall of the Palace of Starn, my arms about the girl of Suba. This was the slave girl. Tears were streaming down her face.

Chapter VII

Clue to a Puzzle

I WAS beginning to get accustomed to these quick changes. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to see King Starn lying there on the rock floor of the hall, his head twisted at a crazy angle, the cross-bow broken and lying at his feet. In a distance I heard a cry of alarm, and I knew that I had killed a King and gained a love. I put Jean of Suba down gently on the floor.

"We must hurry," I said.

I started to run swiftly down the hall toward the panel that led to John's hide-away. The girl's sandled feet padded after me. I found the panel and opened it quickly. The voices were closer, shouting for revenge. Then the panel opened. I pushed her through, into the tunnel beyond. I heard a cry of wrath. They had discovered King Starn's body. I followed Jean into the tunnel and we ran in the darkness. I was sure of my way now, and I held her hand to guide her. It was soft and very small in my fingers.

John's tiny room was empty. I knew no other way out, but I could see light coming from a slanting shaft. The shaft was small, hardly more than two feet across. I turned to the girl and she stared up at me with complete trust in her eyes.

"I don't know the way from here," I said. "We'll have to take our chances. Are you game?"

"Game?"

"Willing to go on. Willing to face death to escape?"

"With you, Nars," she said quietly.

I liked that. I pushed her into the shaft and started to crawl upward myself. The rocks were smooth and several times she slipped and fell back against me. At last we reached the top. Here was the palace wall. It was covered with fine stone and a walk had been constructed around the top of it. From the many niches in the outer side, I could look down upon the strange Mighty City. The Mighty City was built mostly of white chalk-stone. The buildings were low and strong. I could see people flowing in waves through the streets. The wall was deserted. Below, in the courtyard, guards rushed about looking for us.

Jean stood beside me.

"We must go at once to Suba," she said.

That sounded nice, but how?

"It may not be easy."

"But, Nars," she said, "surely your wings will carry us."

I felt foolish. I had forgotten the heavy leather things strapped to my shoulders.

I wasn't sure they would work. There

was more of Fred Hamilton in me at this moment, than Nars, the winged man. I flapped the wings outward and felt them lift me from the wall. I felt suddenly strong and confident.

"Here goes nothing," I said, and took her in my arms.

I STEPPED up to the highest point of the wall and spread the wings. Strength surged through me. Strength that came only to the man of Suba. I leaped into space and flapped the wings and we soared upward as lightly as a feather. It was a wonderful feeling, surging upward into the clear sky, holding the girl in my arms.

We were high over the city, and Jean, her arms about my neck, stared downward. I heard her laugh scornfully.

"See how they shout and point at us," she said. "They cannot harm us now."

I looked down. We were close to the edge of the city, and below, warriors rode outward, fanning across the desert, looking very small and helpless on their six-legged camels.

"They cannot harm us now," I said. "And we will be in Suba soon."

Suba.

I, Nars, winged man of Suba, was going home. Home to a place that I could not remember. Home with a girl who knew me well, to people who knew my past. Yet to me, it was blanked out like chalk erased from a blackboard.

Nars, I thought, there is much of Fred Hamilton in your blood, and Fred Hamilton isn't entirely sure that he'll be able to go through with this strange adventure.

The warriors below us faded behind and the desert became a weird, lost world of flowing sand. Now I was conscious only of the girl with her arms tight around my neck, and of the vast nothingness below. Evidently that sixth sense of mine was guiding me toward Suba, for Jean said nothing for some time. In a distance, the plain seemed to grow greener. I thought I saw the thin, ribbon-like strip of blue that could have been a river. The sand turned green and I realized that it was not sand at all, but grass growing close to the desert, hiding the desolate sand.

The river was under us, and the soft, flowing lines of small hills and valleys. Jean pointed to the right.

"That should be the way," she said. "The River Soona bends into the heart of our land."

The River Soona?

I flew toward it and followed the curves of its broad surface. I dropped lower until I could see the trees that bordered it and the tiny boats that floated on its surface. Then we were hardly twenty feet above the water and a strange cry floated up to us.

A moment later I knew it was a warning. It was the battle cry of those from the Mighty City. Something hit my chest suddenly and sent a burning shower of sparks through my body. I tingled with pain. I grasped the small feathered arrow with one hand, trying to wrench it loose. Jean cried out but it was too late. I had no strength to use the wings. Swiftly, like a falling bird, I swept downward toward the trees. I could no longer see, and the pain was terrible. I felt myself crashing toward death, and tried desperately to shield Jean's body with my own.

CHAPTER VIII

A King Dies Twice

I HEARD a scream of fear. I opened my eyes to see Jean Halsey dashing toward the door of the room in which she and I had been imprisoned. At the door, holding a smoking revolver was the man we had spoken of a few min-

utes ago—Jules Waterman.

I rolled over and tried to struggle to my feet. A bursting pain caught me in the chest and I groaned and sank back. Jean was between Waterman and I. I could see his cruel, lean face twisted with passion.

She dashed herself at him and he hit at her savagely. Jean crumpled to the floor, sobbing.

I tried to get up again, still dazed by the transition from Suba to earth. On Suba an arrow had hit me and I fell. On earth, Jules Waterman had come into the room and fired point blank, sending hot lead ripping into my body. I wondered what had happened. Why had he fired?

Then I saw Ward Reese crumpled on the floor near me, and I knew. On Suba, I had somehow caught King Starn with his guard down and had killed him. Evidently at the same time I had managed to overcome Reese and throttle him. Waterman had come in time to prevent our escape.

Waterman crossed the room with small mincing steps. His face was the face of a killer. His body, even the hand that grasped the gun, was wiry. Shifty eyes caught mine, darted to Reese, then back to me. Waterman grinned.

"You've succeeded in complicating things," he said. "In a way, I'm not unhappy about it."

Jean was getting to her feet. She was behind Waterman. I wondered if she would be fool enough to try to attack him again. She didn't have a chance. Waterman was sly, deadly.

"Jean," I said. "It's no use. Don't try to fight."

"That's better," Waterman said. He pushed his gun into his pocket and helped me into a chair. I was breathing hard. The bullet had hit me to the right of the heart, and high. My shoulder ached. Jean helped me out of my coat and tried to stop the flow of blood with a piece of my shirt. Waterman stood nearby, watching Jean with some amusement.

"I take it you think a lot of your friend," he said. There was no emotion in his voice. Jean ignored him.

"You realize that getting rid of Reese isn't going to be easy to explain? He's well known. His daughter will be here in a few minutes asking where her father is."

I said:

"Lay off, Waterman. I don't know much about you, but a murder or two shouldn't bother your conscience. As for me, I'll take what comes."

He nodded ever so slightly.

"Nice talk, flier," he said. "I wonder if you will? Need a doc, don't you?"

I was surprised.

"Shoot a guy and then offer him a doctor? That doesn't sound like you."

HE GRINNED. His teeth were very white and large. They made the grin unpleasant.

"Sure I lost my temper," he said. "Reese came up here to bring you down. Wanted you to fly me out of the country. When I came up to check on him you had the guy by the throat choking hell out of him. I lost my temper. Now that he's out of the way, I'm not so sure you didn't do the right thing. How much do you know about this set-up?"

I said I didn't know anything and I didn't give a damn what was going on. My shoulder was bleeding badly and I needed help.

"You go down past the hangar and find a little green house down there across the fence," he told Jean. "There's an old slug by the name of Watson. Tell him to come here. My boys are posted all over the place. If you try to make a run for it . . ."

He patted his gun pocket affection-

ately.

Jean said nothing. She hurried out of the room. From the chair I could see her cross the lawn, running swiftly.

Sealey Watson. How did he figure in on this mess?

Then when I saw the two of them coming back, I knew why Watson had been called. He carried a little black bag under his arm and he was hobbling along as fast as he could with his heavy cane.

Jean didn't come up with him. He said nothing to me, but put the bag down and went to work swiftly. Jean came up in a minute or two with a dish of steaming water. Watson was good. In ten minutes he had fished out the bullet, cleansed the wound and had it bound up carefully. He stood up, sighed and looked at Waterman. Waterman had been staring out the window all this time.

"Okay," Waterman said. "Fifty bucks, like before. Keep your mouth shut. That okay?"

Sealey Watson didn't smile. He didn't look at me.

"Satisfactory," he said and gathered up his stuff. He left the room.

Waterman looked at me.

"Can you fly?"

"That all depends," I said.

The smile faded from his face.

"Look," he said, "you ain't kidding me. You didn't act so dumb about Reese without a good reason. What did you come here for?"

I told him I delivered a plane to Reese and Reese asked me to stay. Miss Halsey had got in trouble and I had tried to help her. Was it my fault if it ended in a gangster's brawl?

He said it wasn't. "You know why Reese wanted you to hang around?"

I said Reese wanted me to check him out in the new plane.

"Nuts," he said. "Reese had been barnstorming for years. He made his first solo while you were nothing but a mother's dream. Reese is good, see, or he was. Here's the line-up. Reese had a nice little game here. He helped guys who were hot, get out of the country. He charged plenty. He got away with it. Reese arranged for us to board here until the heat was off. Then he flew us out of the States. You don't think he made all this dough on real estate?"

I WAS learning plenty. More than it was safe for me to know. All this time Jean had remained silent. Now that she saw I felt better and that Waterman hadn't killed me, she was somewhat relieved.

"This doesn't mean a thing to us," she said. "All we want is to get away from—from this madhouse."

Waterman grinned. This time he was quite sincere.

"Nice speech," he said. "Girl and guy walk away from a nest of rats, all wanted by the cops. They say nothing to no one. Happy ending. That ain't the way I read it, sister. You're too good to let go."

Jean's face went pale.

"What do you want from us?" I asked.

"That's better," Waterman admitted. "I got plenty of dough. As far as Reese is concerned, he don't need anything now. His daughter flew up to Chi this morning. She's picking up a couple of hoods that need an airing in the country. She's the only one I got to worry about.

"Meanwhile, I don't trust this guy Flemish, or I'd get him to fly me out. That leaves you. You're a good flyer; I checked on that. Get me into Mexico and I leave ten thousand bucks laying in the seat when I climb out. You and your girl friend can set up housekeeping in Brooklyn and live happy and

peaceful. Is it a deal?"

Something was worrying me very much. I had the rest of the characters in this little tragedy pretty well pegged. They all fitted into Suba and that made it easier. I had a double chance to fight against them.

Jules Waterman was different. I had never met his double in Suba. I didn't know what to do or how to fight. I might drop Waterman in Mexico and get out clean. If I didn't, Jean would have to suffer with me.

"Let the girl go," I said, "and I'll fly."

"No," he said quickly. "No, that's out. The girl would rat before we reached the border. She's got to fly with us."

I tried another approach.

"How many ex-cons has Reese got holed up here?"

Waterman said: "Fifteen beside myself. Two more tonight will make seventeen, and Reese's daughter. They can all go to hell. I'll skip while I can. They're hot after me, and if I'm caught again, I'll be in for life. Cut the stalling, flyer, and get a plane warmed up."

I didn't have any choice, not just then.

"Okay," I said, "for ten thousand, in cash. You go down to the hangar and we'll see you there. We won't try to escape."

He patted his gun pocket.

"We go together," he said.

THE Sky Coach was out on the apron and Pete Flemish was working on the motor. He didn't know Waterman, or at least he pretended he didn't.

"Pete," I said, "one of Reese's guests wants a hop. How's the Coach?"

"She's all warmed up," he said. "Been working on the plugs. They're hitting perfect."

He opened the door and held it while Jean and Waterman got into the rear seat. I strapped them down and climbed in. I checked the switch and set the brakes. Flemish was at the prop.

"Switch off," I yelled.

"Switch off."

Flemish gave the prop a half dozen turns and yelled, "Contact."

I put the switch on and advanced the gas a little.

"Contact."

The motor roared the first time, and Flemish jumped back. I let her idle a minute, then gave her the gun. The ceiling was very low. It didn't worry me much. The coach would climb high. I figured on lots of altitude for the flight. The gas checked on full.

The runway dropped away from us and Reese's estate became a small checkerboard of greens and browns with a white toy house in the center.

I looked back. Jean was game. She gave me a faint smile. Waterman wasn't so happy, and what I saw made my heart jump.

Waterman's face was pasty and gray. He was gulping for air and his eyes, usually narrow and hard, were wide open.

Waterman didn't like flying. He was sick.

I started to sing to myself. It wasn't exactly a song. Just a little tune over and over, with the same words.

"Waterman is sick, Waterman is sick, and we've got a chance."

It was silly. Sure it was. Not to me, though. I knew he packed a gun and if he became desperate he might use it—even in the plane. The state prison was as bad as death to Jules Waterman. He might choose death in the sky before he would allow himself to be taken back.

I hit a couple of imaginary air pockets and sent the ship bouncing up and down. At five hundred feet we hit the

mist and at six hundred it closed in thick and white. The Coach was equipped with all instruments and I could fly blind easily.

The air was rough, so I went up. Luckily the fog lifted and at two thousand, it was clear. I headed south because I knew Waterman could see the compass from where he sat. I looked back again.

JEAN was taking it well. I guessed that she liked flying. Waterman wasn't so good. He was holding his hand over his stomach and I think he could have used a paper bag if there had been one in the coach.

I gave the plane a forty degree turn, headed down and levelled off again.

"Hey," Waterman shouted, "cut out the rough stuff. This isn't fun for me."

I tried not to smile when I turned again.

"Can't help it," I said. "The air's rough. Got to fight it out the best way I can."

He was a complete sucker. This was a new world to him and he knew nothing about it.

We had flown about fifty miles. I didn't dare give it to Waterman all at once. We flew into a drizzle of rain and the ship tossed a little. I accented each dip as much as I could. Waterman was all fed up. He didn't have the heart for it. I knew how his stomach felt. I had felt the same way the first time I soloed.

I shouted over my shoulder.

"It's a hell of a long way to Mexico. We'll have to refuel a couple of times. Damned long trip, though this ship's up to it if we take it easy."

He was game.

"Do it your way," he said. "But keep going south. I ain't a dumb bunny, even if this is new scenery for me."

I settled down to the business of flying. In my mind I had a little field picked out in southern Illinois. It wasn't a long hop. The field was one of those things that someone starts a dozen miles from town, fails to get CAA approval, and folds up. I had landed there once. It was in a deep valley and the updrafts were terrible around it. If the air would clear up before we got there, I thought we could sit down. It was easy for me to stall the motor and pretend engine trouble.

I kept right on flying in a straight line and Waterman looked a little better. I tried to spot that field in my mind. We hit a clear spot in the air and I saw a familiar town far below. We were on the way.

A HALF hour passed, then forty-five minutes. The fog lifted and the sun came out. Fifteen minutes to my field, if my memory was any good. I cut the motor, made a grab for the instrument panel and fumbled around with it for a minute. I could sense Waterman going taut behind me.

"What the hell . . . ?"

I snapped the switch on again, gunned her and levelled off.

"It's okay," I said. "She's not doing so hot. That guy Flemish must have tampered with the controls."

Waterman was ready for anything after that. I cut the engine twice more, kicked the coach into a spin and we rode her down five hundred feet. That time Waterman was ready to get out and walk.

I don't know just why. Perhaps she had complete confidence in me, but Jean didn't seem to be worrying much. I was happy about that. I wouldn't have hurt the kid for anything. I pasted a worried frown on my forehead and turned to Waterman. I've never seen a more dejected looking hunk of humanity.

"We've got to go down," I said. "This engine needs tinkering. Flemish didn't do it any good."

I heard him swear at Flemish, then I saw the green hill loom up. The hill that had the unused landing strip behind it.

I nosed down and turned so that the strip was in sight, almost hidden behind the hill.

Thermal drafts played the devil with the Coach for a while. This wasn't the worst of it. I knew that as I put her down beyond the hill, the air was rougher than a jeep ride. I was ready for it when it came.

The coach bucked like a bronco and I side-slipped over the trees at fifty feet, hit on one wheel and straightened up at the edge of the runway.

The strip was worse than I expected. Some farmer had been hauling rocks off his land and had been dumping them on the grass. He evidently didn't care whether we lived or not, because I couldn't pick one spot where it was possible to dodge them. I set the brakes as fast as I dared, but it was too late. The coach hit a small boulder and went into a ground loop. The scenery whirled around faster than I could follow it. I closed my eyes and held on. Something hit my forehead a crack and I heard Jean cry out. Waterman didn't make a sound.

CHAPTER IX

Suba and Home

WHEN I closed my eyes, I left the plane. I was falling again. Falling with wings clinging as a dead weight. Falling toward the forest of Suba.

Something cushioned our fall, for I was able to stagger to my feet. The ground was covered with soft, deep moss of a peculiar reddish tint. Above us the soft bows of the evergreen trees were broken and twisted where we had hit them. The arrow was small and I tore it out of my chest. The blood flowed after it. I turned to Jean. The wind was knocked out of her. I started to gather her in my arms, for I was still confused and filled with pain. Then I heard the bushes break and the heavy panting of someone running toward us in the underbrush. I left Jean's side and stepped quickly behind a tree.

A man came into sight. He wore the leather uniform of the warriors of the Mighty City. He carried a small bow and a quiver of arrows. One of them was strung in the bow. He stopped short as he saw Jean and stared around in amazement.

At last I had fitted in all the pieces. Here was Jules Waterman of Suba. The gunman in the guise of a warrior.

Before he had a chance to release the arrow, I was upon him. I don't think my fury could have been human. Somehow the double hatred for the man gave me strength beyond anything I could have hoped for. He cried out and went down under the blow I gave him. Before he could get up, I was upon him. Suba had taught me one thing. Here, men fought like animals. No holds were barred. My wings troubled me some, but I grappled with him and prevented him from rolling over. My fingers, the sturdy fingers of the flying man of Suba, tightened around his throat. In a moment it was over.

Jean had struggled to her feet when I returned to her. She made a crude bandage from her skirt and stopped the flow of blood from my chest. I felt better, but I needed sleep. I was exhausted and almost at the point of death. The struggle had been great and much of my blood had gone. Jean made a bed of moss for me there in the

forest and it was warm and comfortable.

I slept.

WHEN I awakened, I felt better. Jean was at my side.

"I have to talk to you," I said. "I have a lot on my mind. Sometimes I even wonder if I am the person you think."

Her eyes widened, but I imagine she guessed the condition of my mind and thought that it wasn't entirely clear.

"You will feel better soon," she said and placed her hand on my forehead. "Sleep again. It will heal your body and your mind."

I sat up. I felt as though I had been hit by a steam roller, but I managed, by leaning back against a tree, to see her face clearly and to gather my thoughts.

"No," I said. "What I have to say won't wait."

She smiled.

"If my Nars must talk, he will talk," she said simply.

"Listen, Jean of Suba," I said. "Perhaps I am Nars and perhaps I am not. After I have told you all I know, it is for you to judge."

She said nothing but her hand squeezed mine.

"Talk."

I did. I told her everything that had happened to me since the day I flew over Ward Reese's estate in the new Sky Coach. Some of it must have been baffling to her for she knew nothing of the other world. She listened to every word. When I had finished, she sat silently for a long time. Then she nodded.

"You have told me a strange story," she said. "Yet Nars, I must believe it, for no one could invent such fantasy. You are truly two men. Perhaps you are one man with two lives. I am not sure. I only know this.

"You are Nars but you have forgotten the life we lived. Still, as Nars, you have delivered the people of Suba from a terrible King.

"The Subans have lived in the valleys along the River Soona for many centuries. They had a superstitious fear of King Starn, for they thought that he came directly from the Sun and from the Sun God. Therefore, when he bid them become slaves, they followed him like animals across the dessert, and were sold into bondage. The people of the Mighty City love to see death. The men fought in the arena until they died. The women," she shuddered, "did not escape so easily."

She paused and her breathing was hard. Her hands were clenched and the knuckles were bloodless.

"You outwitted Starn. Even as he fired his crossbow, you fell forward, folded your wings about him and blinded him. You have delivered the Subans from a bad king. Now they do not fear. They will resist the raiders from the Mighty City and will never again go there, for they will not fear a king who is dead."

THE shadows were collecting along the river and the forest was dark and warm and restful.

"What about me?" I asked. "Where did I come from? Where did I meet you?"

She shook her head and I saw a tear in her eye.

"It is enough for you to know that you were more clever than your friends. You made the wings and you made them work for you. You met me—I don't know how much I can tell you—perhaps you met me in both worlds; for though you say you leave me at times, I am never away from you. If I can share you with another Jean, and yet have you here with me forever, I cannot ask more. You have never left my

side since we escaped from the palace. You will never leave me again. We met in Suba as girl and boy and we have never parted. It has been a long time, and the future will be longer and happier."

I shook my head. I couldn't be in two places at once.

"When I open my eyes, I am back on earth. I am not with you then."

"You are wrong, Nars," she said. "Perhaps part of you goes away. Perhaps your soul goes. Still, you do not leave me. You have *never* left me."

"Have I lived here in the valley? Have I loved you and been with you since the beginning?"

She smiled happily. The tears were gone. She put her arms around me tenderly.

"Forget the past—and live for the future," she said.

SOMETHING was afire in my head. I had a splitting headache. I concentrated on one tiny spot and found that I was staring at a broken, mangled instrument board. Somewhere near me a girl was crying softly. I fought to get control of myself and realized that I was hanging upside down in the cabin of the battered Sky Coach. I couldn't see Jean Halsey because I couldn't move easily.

I got the safety belt loose and half fell, half slid to a more normal position. I could use my arms and legs.

I released Jean and because the belt was built for both passengers, the limp body of Jules Waterman slipped out with her and fell with a thud. I helped Jean out of the plane and sat down on the turf. I felt like crying, I was so damned weak and shaken. Jean was in better condition than I was.

"Fred," she said. "Fred, your face is cut. Are you all right?"

"I'm all right." I ran my hand across my face. It was criss-crossed with little surface wounds. The hand came away bloody.

"I guess that Waterman's number is up," I said. "It's about ten miles to the nearest town. Can you walk?"

"I can," she said. She helped me get up. My right leg was paining me, but the bone was okay.

I went back to the plane and looked in at Jules Waterman. No one but myself could have explained the blue-black bruises on his neck. No one but the killer of the warrior in the Suban forests.

Jean and I found the main road a half mile away. A farmer picked us up and took us into a small town called Stuebenville. I went to the police station and told them who I was.

The police captain, an old guy with a sour face and a badly worn uniform, didn't believe me. He continued to look sour and angry, until I mentioned that the dead man in our plane was Jules Waterman. That woke him up. Waterman was hot news in every town in the state. The captain, Ed Hickley was his name, found his coat and shouted for his car to be brought around. We went howling out to the field in Hickley's Chevvy and when he made sure the man in the plane was Waterman, he wanted to take us out for dinner and keep us over night. Meanwhile, we were letting Wanda Reese and her crew of cut-throats plan their get-away a few hundred miles north.

"Look here," I told Hickley, once he had phoned the news of Waterman's death to Chicago. "We need a plane in a hurry."

Hickley, by this time, was ready to turn the city of Stuebenville over to us.

"There's a kid named Newton who's got an old crate out on his farm," he said. "Flies it all the time, though how

he keeps the thing in the air, I don't—"

I told him that was okay.

"Lead us to Newton and we'll be grateful."

HALF an hour later I had rented Newton's dilapidated Cub and we were limping back toward Reese's place. Two hours—and I put the panting Cub down in front of the hangar and climbed out. Sealey Watson had evidently been watching the place, for as soon as I was on the ground he came limping across the field toward us. Watson was excited. He panted and wheezed as he reached me.

"Hey," he shouted, "I been wondering when you was coming back. Don't go up there to the house. Something's gone wrong and there's hell to pay. That bunch of gangsters has got the place guarded like a fort."

I wanted to talk with Watson. I didn't care much about tackling the house alone.

"Did Reese's daughter come home?" I asked.

He nodded, then saw Jean as she climbed out of the plane.

"Say," he said with a sigh, "I'm sure glad Miss Halsey got out of there. I been worried about her." Then in answer to my question, "Miss Reese came back all right. She brought a couple of fellows. I think I know them. Two lifers escaped from the State pen two nights ago. I been putting two and two together."

I grinned at him.

"You been doing more than that," I said. "How come Waterman knew who to send for when I was hurt?"

The old man's face turned slightly red.

"I'd like to explain that," he said. "I don't have much chance to make money. I used to be a doctor before I got too darn old for it. Reese knew it. He used to call me in as sort of a house doctor for his 'guests.' When I realized who his guests were and why I was treating so many bullet wounds, it was too late. Reese would have shot me if I talked. He had an eye on me all the time. I needed the money." He shrugged. "Even old men have to eat."

Somehow I couldn't blame him too much. I said:

"Now, about the house. You don't think the rest of Reese's *guests* have escaped?"

"Nope," he shook his head. "They're up there all right. Pete Flemish got scared when you left. He took off in the big plane and got tangled up in a tree at the far end of the field. When I got to him it wasn't any use. Flemish had a record in Chicago. Killed a guy up there. I've known that for a long time. I ain't sorry he's dead."

His eyes were gleaming.

"The rest of them—there must be twenty, not counting Miss Reese—don't dare to take to the road. The police wouldn't look for them here. There's enough room for some of them in the other airplane but they don't trust each other. It's like a bunch of skunks all holed up together, each threatening to stink the other out."

He paused, then said with a sigh,

"Wanda Reese is the worst one of the lot."

I called the police at Chicago. I called from the hangar, because there was a direct line. At ten that night, fifteen squad cars of State Police and some city detectives came in and surrounded the house. Sealey Watson, Jean and I stayed at the hangar because the cops didn't want us to get messed up. They surrounded the house in the moonlight, closed in and at midnight someone blew a whistle.

After that it didn't take more than a half hour to drag out twenty assorted

pugs and killers. It was a nice haul and the police were pleased.

WANDA REESE and the others were brought down to the hangar. Wanda was cold as ice and took it well. She listened to Inspector Skeems of Chicago, while he told her that she would get at least fifteen years for harboring criminals and assisting in their escape. She heard Skeems tell her that she was the lowest type of criminal alive and that it was too bad that she had not been killed with her father, and thereby saved the state the expense of boarding her.

Sealey Watson was there, and Jean and I. A few cops were there, but most of them had left with car loads of Reese's *guests*. Wanda did some plain and fancy swearing at me for doing away with her Dad, but not once did I see a tear or any sign of a crack-up. The girl was hard to the core. I was almost glad I had hit her with the riding whip that night.

Then Sealey Watson did a strange inexplainable thing that, save for chance, I would never have understood.

He drew a gun from his coat and before anyone could prevent it, shot Wanda Reese straight through the forehead.

The girl slumped to the floor. The huge hangar was full of stunned silence. A couple of cops dashed for Watson but he had already dropped the gun on the floor. He waited while they snapped the cuffs on him. Lieutenant Skeems went to work on the old man.

"Not that the girl didn't deserve it," Skeems said angrily, "but who the hell do you think you are to take justice in your own hands?"

There was, flashing in my eyes, an urgent message to return to Suba. A message that I could not mistake, for each time my eyes blinked, the light of Suba grew stronger. Why? I did not know, but I knew I must go. I closed my eyes.

I WAS standing in the palace of Suba, in a huge courtroom. Before me were many men, dressed simply as I was, strong muscled and clean limbed. These were the men of the Suban plain. Locked in chains, their faces twisted and contorted with anger, were many of the slave buyers of the Mighty City.

On the floor, her body prostrate, one arm drawn queerly beneath her, was Princess of Starn, the wicked girl who had beaten Jean of Suba.

One man stood alone. It was John the Aged. John who had saved me that second day in Suba. He was talking.

"Subans, go home. Forget the Mighty City. The key criminals are in bonds. The last of the ruling family is dead."

He held a dripping blade in his hand. He stood over the Princess' corpse.

"But why—why did you kill her?" I cried in horror.

John's eyes clouded with tears but his voice was firm.

"Why do you think I remained so close to the palace? King Starn wasn't the true father of the Princess. Many years ago she was stolen from her crib in a poor part of the city. Stolen for the King; for she was an attractive child, and the King was without wife or child.

"I was a poor man. I could not fight a king. I could only come here and watch over my daughter. She became wicked, and was of no more use to society. Who, more than I, was entitled to judge her?"

That was my message, and having it, I was again in our normal world. I was once more listening to poor Sealey Watson. He faced Inspector Skeems with

wide, untroubled eyes.

"I have nothing to say," Watson was telling Skeems. "What I do is my business, until I encroach on the powers of the state. I am ready to take my punishment."

AFTER they were gone, and Jean and I were alone, I propped the ship and prepared to take off for a long forgotten apartment in Buffalo, then I called home. I didn't ask Jean if she meant to go. She was as alone in the world as I was, and in my mind there was no doubt. We had no other fate. We would go together, without questioning each other.

Just before we took off, I held her in my arms and kissed her. It was a strange kiss, for interwoven with it was the fleeting, crazy-quilt impression that I was kissing both Jean Halsey and Jean of Suba, the girl of my other life.

I wonder if, being one and the same, I do live two lives? If I do, will the two gradually merge until Jean and I at last live together in a single world, the lovely green valleys of Suba, where the River Soona flows peacefully through our beloved country?

Perhaps, after all, we will discover together what my true past has been. Which would be preferable, life on the world called Suba, or in a five-room apartment in Buffalo? I'm sure Jean has no choice, for her kiss is as tender on earth as it is on Suba. As for myself, I am a flyer. With wings, be they of fabric and metal or fashioned of leather, I will be happy.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA AND A CORPSE

IN 1750 near Manchester in England, there lived a woman who was consumed with the fantastic fear of being buried alive. For years she pondered and secretly worried until she reached her wit's end. Her medical advisor, Mr. Charles White, thought she was crazy when she approached him with her plan. She promised to leave a substantial part of her estate to Mr. White and his entire family, on the condition that the doctor paid her a morning visit for twelve months after her supposed death. But, anxious to please her and thereby assure his family of a steady income, the doctor complied with her wish.

After Mrs. Beswick's death, the doctor made the necessary preparations for embalming. Her body was then placed in the attic of the old mansion in which she died, and in which the doctor took up his residence. In accordance with her wishes he visited her every morning, and never made arrangements for her burial. When he built a new home for himself on King street in Manchester, he moved the embalmed body. At the death of the faithful doctor she was moved to her present resting place, the Manchester Museum of Natural History and may be seen there today.—*C. S. Rice.*

NO OIL—IN THE LAND OF OIL

AFTER two years of occupation the Japanese still have not succeeded in repairing all the Netherlands East Indies oil refineries which were so thoroughly destroyed by the Dutch when they retreated from the islands in March, 1942. Consequently, their objective to utilize the Archipelago's annual yield of 58,000,000 barrels of petroleum for their war machine, has not been achieved. The enemy has the raw product, but lack of refining utilities has forced him to seek "ersatz" motor fuels.

On March 29, a broadcast from Batavia reported that the Japanese are building a plant on Java which will convert palm oil into motor fuel. In 1940, the Indies produced 236,651 tons of this oil, or twenty-four per cent of the world's supply. However, all but ten per cent was exported and used in the manufacture of soap and chemicals.

Experiments had demonstrated the possibility of converting palm oil into motor fuel, but with the Indies' vast petroleum resources the need for such a replacer never arose. The Japanese, however, claim that their processing method is simpler and more economical than previous methods. Their contention is based on the fact that it does not require "absolute" alcohol (99 per cent dehydrated) and sulphuric acid, and consequently the need for acid-resisting equipment. Their process utilizes only refined palm oil, water, caustic soda and commercially pure alcohol (95 per cent dehydrated). Furthermore, their process takes less time, the announcer said, because it excludes the lengthy alcohol dehydrating step, while the resultant fuel is practically free from the danger of putrefaction.—*R. Ames.*

DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU

By RICHARD CASEY

MARIE WALLACE moved quietly down the darkened hall and hesitated at the library door. She looked in at the profile of her father at the big desk. She knew that he must be tired. Her hand, resting on the panel of the partly opened door, slipped and produced a sudden sound against the varnished surface.

The old man in the study whirled in

Something . . . some THING, was there behind him. He knew it, but dared not turn to look

"I know there is another world, peopled by something unhuman," wrote Wallace in his book —and he was right!

his chair, coming half out of it, his body twisted in a tense, frightened posture.

"Marie?"

The girl was puzzled.

"It's I, father. What on earth is wrong with you?"

She saw the wild, frightened look on his face, the distended eyes that softened slowly and became normal.

"I'm—I'm jumpy, I guess," he admitted, and arose. He was tall, but very thin and tired looking. He came toward her, the frightened expression replaced by an uncertain smile. "Guess I need some rest."

Marie Wallace went into the library, meeting him halfway, her arms outstretched to rest on his thin shoulders.

"Dad," she begged, "out with it. Something's been hurting you. Something you need to share with me. I'm the only one now, you know."

He stood quite still, studying her grave lovely face, wondering how much he dared say. She was right. He'd have to tell someone soon. Tell—or keep that horrible pain bound up inside him until it drove him mad.

His eyes evaded hers. He returned to his desk and slumped down in the deep leather chair. Marie seated herself on the edge of the desk, her slippered toes touching the carpet, the blue robe trailing softly over the dark wood.

"Is it the book?"

She knew the book worried him a lot. It had gone swiftly before mother died. Now it was being written at a much slower speed—each page a week's work in his mind.

He shook his head.

"The book has nothing to do with it," he said. She thought that his voice was almost stubborn, as though the book *might* be playing a part and that he refused to acknowledge it. "It's—it's something far more subtle, more devilish than that."

He was going to tell her now. She knew he was. She saw the skin at the corners of his eyes wrinkle and watched his fists clench slowly.

"It's so damned childish," he blurted out. "Like a nightmare."

She waited. The room was cold and she drew the robe closer about her white throat.

He looked up at her.

"Marie," he said simply, "thousands of people get the same feeling. I used to have it as a child. It's a very simple thing, really. It's that horrible feeling you get sometimes late at night that something or someone is staring at your back."

She smiled.

"I don't quite understand."

He frowned.

"But you do. That is, you will, if I can say it the way I want to. Let's say that you're curled up with a good mystery book some night. You hear strange, imaginary sounds in the room. Then, suddenly, because your subconscious mind forces you to, *you look behind you.*"

She nodded slowly, remembering the fright in his eyes when he had looked around *at her.*

"Go on."

He shook his head.

"There isn't so much more to tell. It's the simplest thing in the world. Your mind is wrapped up in some mystery, or you're alone, and you have that urge to look around suddenly, as though to discover something behind you. Of course it's all quite silly. There is never anyone there."

"I know," she nodded. "I've done that. *Everyone* does it dozens of times in their life. It's—it's sort of a little games of nerves we play with ourselves when we're excited. Surely that isn't what you wanted to tell me. You're too old to be frightened by *that!*"

HE placed both hands on the desk before him and flexed the fingers slowly, staring at them. He nodded.

"That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you that I *am* frightened of," he said. "You see, Marie, in only one respect does my experience differ from the others."

He was silent for a moment, and she felt herself go rigid from head to foot. She knew what was coming. Knew, somehow, what he was going to say. If he said it, it would mean that her own father was quite mad.

"When I turn around," he said, "I actually *see* something. Just the tiniest bit of a disappearing monster. Just the shadow of something horrible."

Marie slipped quietly from the desk. The library now was more full of shadows. A place apart from the rest of the house. She wanted to take him out of it. Wanted to lock the door and lead him away.

She forced a smile to her lips, but her cheeks were pale and she could feel ice in her fingertips. She sat down on the edge of his chair and put an arm about his shoulders.

"But—you couldn't actually see anything, Dad," she said, trying to sound comforting. "You're tired. The book has been a tough assignment. Take a rest. We can go up to the lake for a week. By the time we get back, things will clear up."

His voice was cold and emotionless.

"If you're trying to say that my mind is affected, Marie, don't believe it. This is all quite real to me. I've studied the thing out carefully in my mind. I've turned around suddenly six different times this evening. I could feel cold, deep eyes staring into my back. Each time, I saw that shadow. Saw a bit of something black, grim and savage, as it faded from the corner of my field of vision. It may be a man. It may be something far worse, but it's there and no one can convince me otherwise."

Deep in her heart she believed him. Her father was no fool. Neither was he an insane old man. His mind was one of the most brilliant in the country. He ranked among America's high ten philosophers and thinkers. Scholars around the world paid tribute to the quality of his brain.

But he was first and always her father, and she had to do something to get him away from this hell he faced.

She had a hard time to keep herself from turning around, to stare into the shadows behind the chair. She fought against the desire.

"Dad—let's get out of here."

He arose and went with her, arm in arm, down the hall and up to his room. She kissed him goodnight tenderly and pinched his nose.

"Get a good night's rest, Dad. Maybe, if the sun shines tomorrow, we will find a brighter view of this old horror world you've created."

LEE CHALMERS climbed out of the coupe, found his gladstone in the rumble seat and ran up the steps to the big white door. Before he could use the old-fashioned knocker, the door opened and Marie Wallace was in his arms. He spent several seconds tasting her lips, decided she hadn't changed a bit in a week and put her back on her feet once more.

"How's your Dad?"

Marie's eyes clouded, then she smiled.

"Come in and see for yourself. The book's almost done. Two or three more nights and it will be ready."

He nodded.

"Good," he said, and followed her in, admiring the keen silken flash of her ankles, the smooth sway of her hips.

"That company of mine is ready to

spend ten thousand on advance promotions of "Future World."

In the hall he dropped his bag near the stairs, for he had been here often and knew that his room was at the top of them. Marie turned and the smile was gone.

"Lee," she said. "Lee—there's something terribly wrong with Dad."

A lot of the sunshine went out of Lee Chalmer's life right then. Thus far this morning he had been a slim, blond young man with a great future at Milestone Publishers, and the sole possessor of a heart belonging to the loveliest young girl in Vermont. Now—what?

"What could possible be wrong with him? Last week he was as fit . . ."

She shook her head.

"Listen closely. He's in the study now. We'll have to go in in a minute because he heard your car drive in. He asked to talk with you. I don't know what he's going to say, but I *do* know you won't believe it, and I'm afraid, because I'm sure that every word he'll say will be true."

Chalmers flashed her a bewildered smile.

"You succeed in being very confusing."

"I know. What I'm going to say now will be even more so. You know Dad well. You recognize his ability and you've studied his habits for years. Perhaps you can help . . ."

She told him about last night. About the monster from the world of shadows. About the thing her father saw when he looked behind him.

WHEN she had finished the story, Lee Chalmers was no longer smiling. He whistled very softly.

"And a thing like that, concocted in the mind of one of the world's finest brains. Could he be going slightly mad?"

"I thought of that," she admitted. "But if you'll check his manuscript, you'll never believe it. The book has never wavered from its course. Every chapter, every word, right up to the present, has been carried through with one thought to a uniform end. His mind is working brilliantly. Perhaps too brilliantly."

He stood there in the hall staring at her. He found a cigarette, offered her one and helped her light it. Their fingers shook a little. He admitted to himself that the story affected his strangely.

"A little too brilliantly," he asked. "What do you mean by that?"

A shudder passed through her body.

"Perhaps—clever men see things that aren't revealed to ordinary mortals like ourselves."

"Don't you believe it," he said. "I'm going to talk with him about the book. I'll get his mind off this dream stuff he's thinking about. You'll see. We'll take him out for some golf this afternoon and he'll forget all about it."

JAMES WALLACE looked up from his desk, laid his pen aside and arose. He accepted Lee Chalmer's outstretched hand.

"Glad you could come up, Lee," he said. "I wanted to talk with you about 'Future World.'"

Chalmers sat down on the desk.

"Go ahead," he said. "It's a swell morning, the birds have been singing just for me all the way up from New York, and Marie says we won't have to postpone the marriage much longer. I'm very happy."

He wasn't. He was worried. Worried and a little frightened about what he had just heard.

Wallace sat down again a little heavily. He passed one hand over his eyes. He hadn't slept last night. He was tired. In spite of that, he managed a

smile.

"You're good for me, boy. At times I might have stopped work on the book if it hadn't been for Marie and yourself."

"Thanks," Chalmers said soberly. "'Future World' isn't a new idea, but we've never had a really fine mind turn out anything along this line. Anything new in the later chapters?"

Wallace shook his head. He leaned back in the chair and stared at the ceiling. When he was working on, or thinking of the book, everything else became secondary. The book could almost be placed in capital letters and outlined in gold. It meant that much to him.

"The same," he admitted. "It sounds right, doesn't it? I am on the right track, am I not? I say that we will go on to a higher plane. That each time, instead of slipping a notch, civilization will go to a new and better world."

Lee Chalmers nodded.

"It isn't so much the outline of the thing that impresses me and the men I work for," he admitted. "The higher plane idea isn't new. In your case, however, we've found a mind that can delve into that world after a world, and offer clear, workable reasons for it being what it is. I'll always remember what you said when your wife died."

He paused, seeing a fleeting expression of pain pass over Wallace's face.

"Pardon me for reminding you of a painful moment, sir," he added, "but you told us that your wife was moving into a new and vastly more wonderful apartment that your own mind had prepared for her. That, in a measure, your own clear thinking had paved the way for her to move forward and upward to another better place."

Wallace nodded slowly.

"I think I'm right," he admitted. "It's amazing what contemplation can bring from the inner mind."

THEY were silent then, staring at each other, each with something on his mind, each hesitating.

"I—I suppose we ought to have lunch," Wallace said. "Marie said I had to give up my work and golf with you two this afternoon."

He started to rise.

"Good," Chalmers said. He was relieved that neither of them had mentioned what they most wanted and yet most dreaded to talk about. "I'll call Marie."

He started toward the door, then heard Wallace gasp as though in sudden pain. He whirled around to catch Wallace standing by his chair, staring behind him at the blank wall.

Wallace came around again, slowly, his face drained of color. The two of them looked at each other. Chalmers grinned a little foolishly. He had been facing the wall. There was nothing there. Nothing.

"I thought . . ." Wallace said in a strained voice, then added, "No matter. I think I'll see a doctor. I'm having a little trouble with my heart."

Chalmers knew what the trouble had been. There, somewhere against a blank, cream colored wall, James Wallace had again turned to catch sight of his monster.

It couldn't have happened. There *was* something wrong with Wallace's mind. Something deep and sinister, Chalmers thought. He must have a long talk with Marie.

But his talk with James Wallace's daughter didn't come that day. That afternoon they golfed at the Beechnut Club twenty miles away, and it was dark when they started the drive home. He didn't know how it happened. You never know. The pavement was slippery because it rained a little just after six o'clock. The curve was sharp and the lights on the other car were far too

brilliant.

Lee Chalmers tried hard to hold his coupe on the slippery shoulder, then they were rolling over and over through space. The coupe landed on its top with a hellish crunching sound and everything was quiet. Marie started to sob. The lights were still on on the dash and somewhere gasoline dripped slowly. It might have been only water. Chalmers couldn't be sure.

He fought his way out of the upturned car, managed to get Marie out, then cursing silently, dragged Wallace's prostrate figure from the other side. By that time a state police car screamed down upon them and the night was alive with headlights. A lot of people were talking loudly, and all trying to tell what happened. Chalmers fought the pain as long as he could. He knew that his left arm was broken because he couldn't move it. He saw the deep, bleeding scar on John Wallace's cheek and hoped dumbly that it didn't hurt too much. Then someone made him lie down on the stretcher and he swore because they insisted on carrying him up the side of the ditch to an ambulance. He knew that Marie was sitting beside him in the ambulance, crying softly. He knew that her father was opposite him, with a white coated man working on that damned cut on his cheek. Then Chalmers passed out and didn't care any more.

JAMES WALLACE was impatient, for he had wasted three days away from "Future World," and every day with the manuscript now was precious. There had been the matter of the cut on his cheek. It was still under a bandage, and it would leave scar tissue in a heavy line from under his eye, down to his chin. Now it was red and ugly. Marie had fortunately come out of the accident in fine condition. Her nerves were better, now that Chalmers had his arm in a sling and was coming along nicely.

Wallace hit the top of the deck with his fist. He wished that *his* nerves were better. The urge to turn and stare behind him hadn't troubled him for some hours now. He wrote swiftly and easier than he had for some weeks.

"Thus—man *must* go on to his reward, living each life in a more perfect existence, passing from one world to another. Perhaps that is the final explanation of the planetary system. Perhaps that is why we are unable to gather more than a rudimentary knowledge of what goes on up on other planets. Call it planet, world, or another dimension of life, we *do*, I have concluded, go on and on, upward and upward toward the light of divine knowledge."

He placed the pen carefully on the desk. A strange feeling crept over him. Here he was, after seven years of hard work, finishing his brain child. Seven years of cudgelling his brain for the correct answers, and now?

But what of that phantom from behind? Was there a message there?

He leaned back in his chair, his body shaking strangely. He felt light headed, almost giddy with the weight of the work lifted suddenly from his mind.

He wondered how a man would feel, after spending his lifetime and draining his well of knowledge to produce a certain set of theories, if he should suddenly find out that he had been wrong.

"What makes me like this?" he muttered. "What puts the doubt in my mind?"

He hadn't told Marie everything.

He had often turned quickly, seeking that elusive horror behind him, and he had recognized the features of a face. Not all the face but part of it. A dark, lopsided ear, perhaps, or a jutting, ugly chin.

IT WAS growing dark outside. Chalmers' car came up the drive and halted. That would be Chalmers getting out, Wallace thought. The door slammed slowly because Chalmers was cumbersome with the bad arm.

Wallace looked at the pile the manuscript made. A neat white oblong against the mahogany of the desk.

He felt a presence in the room. He stiffened, his fingers clutching the arm of the chair. Tonight, more than ever before, he sensed the full horror of the thing. It wasn't Marie. Chalmers hadn't had time to come in yet.

"Don't look behind you," he whispered to himself. "Don't look . . ."

But he couldn't help it. He—couldn't help . . .

His head turned suddenly, and this time he saw more than the brief flash of a face.

He saw the full face.

He saw the face of a man, not living on a higher plane, but a man, if you could call him that, from a beastly, filthy underworld. James Wallace stared, because in that face he saw the loss of his work, the loss of his entire life's thought. The face had a scar. A white scar against dark, leathery skin, running from under the eye down to the chin.

James Wallace knew that, leaving as he was against his will, he was not going on to the higher plane he had dreamed of. The scales, instead, tipped the other way, and he was going down.

It was very dark and cold and he clutched his face with both hands and tried hard not to cry out as the pain stabbed at his heart.

"HEART failure," the doctor said quietly. He stood up and started to put his things away in his bag. "I'll call an ambulance. I assume you'll want him taken to town."

Chalmers had his good arm tightly about Marie Wallace's waist. He held her, staring at the straight, stiff old figure in the leather chair. Chalmers' eyes were dry and his face was twisted in pain. Pain that came from inside.

"Yes," he said. "Yes—that will be best."

The doctor went out into the hall. Chalmers could hear him asking central for a number.

"Marie," Chalmers said, "you'd better try to rest."

She wiped tears from her eyes. Her face was very pale and her eyes seemed larger than ever. She couldn't look at her father now. Couldn't look—ever again.

"I'll—go."

"Let me go up with you."

She drew away from him gently.

"No—Lee, I'd rather be alone. You—stay here until they come."

He nodded. He knew what she wanted.

She was quite steady when she went out. Chalmers could hear the doctor still talking on the phone. He felt a queer shudder pass through him.

Heart failure? Perhaps, if there had been a terrific shock to produce it. Chalmers thought he knew what the shock had been. The manuscript was here, but sometime after James Wallace died, the wind had whipped in and scattered the pages about the floor. Many of them were in the fireplace, burned, irreplacable.

The position in which James Wallace had died caused Chalmers more concern than anything else. His head was turned in an unnatural position, and his eyes, full of terror even in death, were staring behind him at the wall.

THE END

REPORT FROM THE

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Readers:

Your editor believes that the time has come for a frank discussion with you. The "Shaver Mystery," as he has chosen to call this whole titanic affair, has been and still is a puzzle which has several aspects.

First of all he wants to point out that Shaver actually believes his own statements to be the truth and that these convictions of his are woven into an entertaining series of stories for a definite purpose.

This purpose is (1) to find others who have had experiences of the same sort, get them to write, and compare their experiences with those of Mr. Shaver and of one another, so as to confirm or corroborate his statements by the only means possible at this time.

AND THERE HAS BEEN EVIDENCE ADVANCED OF A VERY STARTLING NATURE! A machine which Mr. Shaver has described to the editor in detail has also been described in detail by a writer who signs his letter with the name he had in (deleted). This description had not been published when this letter was received, and is of a machine which is unknown to present day science and which embodies an entirely new principle WHICH HAS BEEN VERIFIED AS BEING SCIENTIFICALLY CORRECT!

That is a type of evidence which must be accepted by everyone. There is a second type which, although not entirely irrefutable, is nevertheless so strong that it must be considered seriously. That is the tremendous flood of letters which are alike in one main respect: namely, the writers emphatically insist that their letter NOT be used for publication and their name not be disclosed. And their evidence is all of one general type. They have had experiences similar to Mr. Shaver's with cave people, or with strange humans who could not have been ordinary people. MANY OF THESE WARNED US TO DROP OUR CAMPAIGN OR WE WOULD RUN INTO REAL TROUBLE WITH THE CAVE PEOPLE! AND MANY OF THEM BELIEVED THEY WERE RISKING THEIR OWN LIVES BY WRITING TO US.

In leading up to our second purpose in publishing these stories: there are certain people who believe that something is about to happen on this old earth which is so stupendous that it is almost beyond imagination. They are very few in number, but have two things in common. First, they do not know whether or not they are reincarnated from a previous existence, members of an ancient race such as the Titans and sent here in human form, or what. But they do know that they are here for a definite purpose which has to do with whatever is going to happen. Second, they have spent their lives so far in perfecting themselves in certain trades and professions which do not overlap. Skills which are practical and concrete, in science, industry, etc. And indications are that when all these people are united they will make an organization which not only will have an expert on every subject, trade, and profession, but that their pooled knowledge will be FAR IN ADVANCE OF ANYTHING THAT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED ON EARTH TO THE PRESENT DAY!

Thus, we urge every reader who has such convictions within him, who believes there is a mystery connected with his purpose here on earth, who believes he has a work of some far-reaching scope to perform, who believes he is part of a great plan, and who is convinced that he knows things today unknown to science, to write to your editor, WHO IS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE!

THE TIME HAS COME FOR ACTION!

Ray Palmer
% Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
185 North Wabash
Chicago 1, Illinois

LIFE ENERGY FROM CARBON?

Sirs:

I wish to state that your correspondents are quite correct in expressing the belief that this planet appears to be quarantined from the life of space. Doubtless they have the same information that I have. It would require a long letter to even briefly outline the reasons why this is considered true. The more I consider the general ideas offered by Shaver, the more occurrences I recall from my records that seem to confirm his views. I have a file of 8,000 clippings on incredible occurrences plus several thousand notes from books; personal testimony, etc.

That the element carbon in its pure state has some affinity with life energy can be easily proved by your readers. In 1924 Brian Brown wrote a book *Dynamic Power of the Inner Mind* discussing the problem, and earlier the matter was taken up by Prof. A. E. Baines in his *Origin and Problem of Life*. This carbon force was named *vitic*. Baines noticed that statues of Egyptian priests and kings in the British Museum held small rods in their hands. Their purpose was unknown. He thought that they might have something to do with vitality, so he went to work to discover some element that "when held in the hand would beneficially affect the nervous system." He discovered that the element was hardened carbon, and its effect was strengthened when used with a magnetic iron or ore.

To prove this force obtain a sensitive galvanometer, a piece of hardened carbon, and a small

FORGOTTEN PAST?

magnet. Place your fingers on the terminals of the galvanometer and see what deflection you get. Then hold the carbon in your right hand and the magnet in your left hand for five minutes, and test your deflection again. You will find that it has increased several points. Auto-suggestion cannot move a galvanometer.

This force has been discussed in the White Robertson studies in *Electro-Pathology* and by Dr. J. Horne Wilson in the *Medical Times* (7-25-14). When the carbon is held in the right hand, the force acts as a nerve stimulant; when held in the left hand, it acts as a sedative. The effects last for as long as twelve hours. Apparently it was known to the ancients.

It has long been the belief of the writer that the source of life energy is more or less etheric in nature; food is not the origin of energy. The purpose of food is to supply heat and material for the renewal of body cells. Our energy is obtained during our hours of sleep. The body more nearly resembles an electric motor than it does the steam engine of the textbooks.

Vincent H. Gaddis
Box 296
Winona Lake, Indiana

You would be surprised at the amount of evidence (or rather opinion) we have received pointing to the incredible theory that we are quarantined to this world and that any attempts to leave it via space ships will prove disastrous. In fact, many readers objected to Mr. Shaver's use of space ships because of this "fact." Unfortunately, ALL of these people with but two exceptions do not allow us to use their letters or names. But it is a weird testimony which is so prevalent that it forces that some attention be given to it. Here is a mystery that some of you readers may help solve, if you will! Your editor has a partial solution, but it is so amazing that he refuses to reveal it until he can be certain of his conclusions and offer some substantial argument in its support.

Regarding those clippings, we have a suggestion. This magazine, and our sister magazine FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, *buys filler articles from ten lines of fifty characters to two hundred lines at 10c per line. We would welcome many such fillers typed 50 characters wide, and offer prompt payment. Especially if they are along the lines of the things you hint in your letter, and along lines that seem to bear out (or disprove) Shaverian material.*

Now about that carbon affinity—we believe that this is a thing simple enough for many of our readers to test. We would be interested in collecting a great number of individual experiments and tabulating the results. How about it, you readers? If it works, it ought to be better than taking the usual stimulants such as benzedrine, caffeine, and quarts of coffee to stay awake and read these magazines!

Due to the unusual and significant developments that have come out of the stories of Lemuria begun in our March issue, this new department will give you a full report each issue until further notice. Can you add to this report?

As for the source of energy not being in food, you have hit upon a vital subject revealed by many of our reticent letter writers!—Ed.

A DREAM? MAYBE NOT!

Sirs:

I am writing this letter in the interest of the Lemurian subject that has graced the pages of AMAZING STORIES for the past two issues. A dream is the main feature; a dream I had about six months before the first Lemurian story, or should I say manuscript, hit the stands.

The dream started in a cavern under the ground. There were people gathered around me. It seems I was some sort of a leader among these men and women. It was I who was their leader, but it was not my body who led them. My people were crying, they lived in constant fear of attack from above. At the thought of the "above" I began to wonder. As hard as I might, I could not picture the surface. All I could see was gray cavern walls, for I was born underground. I had never gazed upon the sun or stars. I looked at my people and smiled, for I had a weapon that could save them.

The surface men had won every battle we had waged, for they had especially bred *tyrannosaurus rex* for the purpose of warfare. My tribe of people were constantly on the move and could not raise such vast herds of beasts. After losing countless numbers of battles, we were forced into the underground for protection. For generations we lived underground, always being under siege by the enemy. My chest swelled as I told them I would lead them into battle.

They looked at me witheringly, because they were used to these pep talks before a battle. Anyway, this battle would end the same as the others, they thought.

Then I told them of my new weapon, a mechanical dinosaur. For a moment there was no sound, then a shout of joy, like the sound lost souls might make when finding they are rescued. A section of the cavern wall slid open and in single file one by one the huge humming robots came.

I mounted upon the first, and with a backward glance moved out of the cavern and into a long tunnel slowly sloping upward. (It seems that my people and I were very tall due to the fact that we were able to ride dinosaurs not unlike one would ride a horse today.) We rode upward for a very long time and finally came to a halt before a huge metal door. On each side of the door stood guards.

I ordered the guards to open the door. One stepped back to pull a lever and the door slid upward. My mount moved forward and a scene was before my eyes that would not easily be forgotten. It was the sun! The sun, all colors of the spectrum! I was seeing the sun for the first time; so real, so vivid that I will be impressed with it for the rest of my life.

I moved my steed out into the sunlight. There before my eyes stretched miles and miles of the greenest of grasses, and cutting this land in half was a river of the deepest blue. And on the other side of that river a city, a huge city surrounded by mighty walls, a city so white and clean that it looked like a city that might come from heaven.

I turned to my comrades and said, "See that beautiful city over there? That is the home of our enemy."

They gave each other uneasy glances, for that city was strong indeed. The attack was ordered. We rode forward with the speed of Mercury. I had decided to concentrate my robot attack on one portion of the great wall. We reached the river, my hair flying behind me, for my hair, as all my fellow men, was about a foot and a half long in the back. We splashed across the river. Any minute I expected to meet the enemy defenses, and perhaps even a counter attack. But there were no beams of destruction or rays of death.

We had reached the wall now. The foremost of the dinosaurs, which included my own, pitched their weight and strength against the wall. As hundreds of dinosaurs pooled their power, the wall began to crack. With a thunderous roar there appeared a gaping hole in the wall.

We piled through the opening and rayed the enemy in the streets, men, women and children—they were all the same to us. Finally came the counterattack. Scores of cavalry men swept down on us to force us back through the break in the wall. It was too late, for too many of us were already through.

I turned to look at the once beautiful city, now in flames. I turned to my men, raised my hand and said, "We have won. The city is ours. Our dead are avenged."

I woke up wiping sweat from my forehead. Only a dream! I sincerely hope you print this dream so that the readers can weigh its contents. I would like to know their reactions to it; whether they think it has any bearing on Lemuria or not.

John Klein
1643 Hancock Street
Ridgewood, Brooklyn, N. Y.

It is a startling thing to consider that others of our readers "remember" or "dream" scenes so much like this (and most important RELATED TO EACH OTHER) that there would almost seem to be some special significance which your editor has not quite been able to ferret out. How many more of our readers have had dreams of action in an historic period far beyond the earliest dates known to modern historians? It is a fascinating subject.—Ed.

CONTEST BETWEEN PLANETS—OR GODS?

Sirs:

We would like to propose a plan. A plan which is simple and yet will serve humanity greatly. The idea has probably occurred to you in one state of thought or another. And that is, to organize. You see, we must get groups of people who are not chained down to the cold earth by the word of what they think is Science. We must get groups of good people whose minds are free of any chains, and find the KEY that can remove the chains of all others.

There will be, in the distant years to come, a contest. A contest between Mars and Jupiter to see who shall control the universe. Earth may or may not enter into that contest. The decision rests on what we do. We must tell the people of our NEW REAL science. Tell them every word of it so that men squeal in delight, and stupid men wear a beaten look. We must tell them that there is no word of science existing right now. The great experience some scientists claim to have is based merely on the words of other men like themselves, long since dead. Science is great. Medicine not only faces both sides to the story, but has gone completely around the circle, if you know what I mean. Whereas astronomy looks at only one side of the story, and has told us nothing at all exciting in all its existence. Naturally there are some great astronomers who work their lives away for humanity and True Science. But it is not for astronomers to decide what is right and what is wrong. It is not for them to decide nor for the chemists. Am I right when I say that it is for the people to decide?

First we must expose the frauds, then show them FACTS! LOGIC!

Earth must enter that mad "contest" for superiority, win it, and show Mars and Jupiter that all men are created equal. THAT THERE SHALL BE NO MASTER PLANET.

Bruce & Wesley & "Turksey" Herschensohn
10616 Kinnard Ave.
Los Angeles 24, Calif.

Your editors do not believe these two boys are

quite aware of the facts behind "Turksey" who constitutes their particular "voice"—and that their interpretations of what they hear are not colored by their imaginations; but JUDGING FROM THOSE CONFIDENTIAL LETTERS FROM READERS RELUCTANT TO GIVE US PERMISSION TO PUBLISH, they are essentially correct in their basic information. There IS a contest on, between Mars and Jupiter, but not in respect to the two planets with those names. A hint can be given to the readers if we mention ancient gods. Mars, god of war, and Jupiter, the father of gods. Or Mars, the bad faction, and Jupiter, the good!

As for these boys' insistence that science is deluded, and that there is a true knowledge to be revealed, it is here that we have one of the most amazing angles to this whole fantastic business. What does it all mean? Under preparation now, to be published in AMAZING STORIES, *is a factual, historic summation of this whole matter, being done in the guise of a super-science novel presented in fiction form. It will be TOP science fiction, as befits this magazine—but confidentially, your editor is losing a lot of sleep thinking about it in a very serious vein, and being very insistent that the writers to whom he has assigned this novel do not distort the factual thread that serves as its inspiration. We predict that this will be the most sensational novel ever published in the science fiction field!—Ed.*

THE PLATES OF MORMON

Sirs:

I couldn't let your statement of Mr. Milton G. Erland, about Joseph Smith's golden plates, go by. You said that Smith never produced the plates and there were no witnesses. This led me to believe that you know nothing about the so-called "Mormon Sect." I suggest you obtain a copy of the Book of Mormon, and read it for yourself. This book will answer more questions than I could ever put in a letter. One thing I will say, there were eleven witnesses to the plates. All these men saw the plates and handled them. If you will read the Mormon books you will find out why the plates disappeared. People have always spoken of the Book of Mormon as the "Mormons' Golden Bible." It isn't a bible at all, simply a record of the people who came first to this part of the world. I have often wondered why the men who go out and dig up bones and ruins of old cities wonder who they were and where they came from, then write some outlandish opinion about it. Why can't they read the Book of Mormon and accept it as an answer more logical than their opinions? The Indians are no riddle to the L. D. S. people. If you study the Indians' customs in the old days and read about the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon, it isn't very hard to see that they are the same people. One more thing, the L. D. S. Church isn't a "sect." It is an established church over 100 years old and has hundreds of thousands of members. About the plates, all of them weren't gold, some were brass. The ones Joseph Smith had weren't all of them. There was a whole room full of them and he was told these would be released at some future time. Perhaps Mr. Shaver's story isn't so far fetched as people would think. I've been quite excited over Mr. Shaver's story.

Mrs. J. W. Hutchens
Cashion, Arizona

Thank you for your exceptionally open-minded letter. It makes us realize we weren't as open-minded when we made that comment, and we apologize for our rudeness. However, we are following your advice and reading the Mormon books, especially because of your mention of Indians. It so happens that the Indians have come up in the Lemurian matter in a way that is highly significant and exciting, and we are determined to follow that angle through to its conclusion. Your opinion of the so-called "scientists" who dig up bones and then vaporize on whose bones they were and what kind of civilization they came from is shared by a great many, including ourselves. After all, as you say, why not accept any other opinion in the matter—and who can say that perhaps the opinion of a "voice from nowhere" is not more informed than the scientist's imagination? Logically, both stories cannot be accepted in anything but an equal sense, both being, after all, just opinion, the opinion of the bone-digger depending solely on his piece of bone, which seems to be something that can be judged many ways! By the way, why don't you read a book called "Oahspe," sold by the Kosmon Press, 2210 West Eleventh Street, Los Angeles, Calif.? You'd find a great deal more about Indians in it that might serve to support your own Book of Mormon. Since we are reading your book, how about a fair exchange —and then write us again! We'd like to know what you think.—Ed.

OCEAN-GOING WHEELS

Sirs:

Like Ezekiel, certain usually-reliable travellers have taken to seeing whirling wheels in odd places. Although in the Old Testament account, the visionary mentioned a variety that spun high in the air, more recent accounts feature an ocean-going type that are equally mysterious.

A sailor's yarn of the sea serpent category to be dismissed lightly? Then, a host of sea captains have entered into a gigantic hoax to keep the files of reliable nautical journals filled with experiences of the same sort—and all accounts from the same general area of the ocean.

For many years now, peculiar wheel-like objects have been sighted in the Indian Ocean—huge devices that spin slowly on a central hub with spokes that extend outwards as much as two hundred feet. Logged records of these massive spinners date back from the recent entries in the "Maritime

Journal," a publication of the British Meteorological Office, to terror-filled accounts from ships' journals of the 1750's. There are even earlier descriptions of the swirling wheels but they cannot be accepted as accurate due to the superstitious, almost hysterical manner in which they were reported.

For a reliably-witnessed account, take the report made by the captain of the British steamer "Talma" as he sailed off the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal: (Report was dated Dec. 28/29.)

"At first," says the captain's report, "what appeared to be bubbles of phosphorescence rising from below and breaking at the surface were sighted. Later, these assumed an appearance almost like flashes of lightning under the water. These rapidly formed into beams, curved as the spokes of a wheel might be, and revolved rapidly from right to left at the rate of two a second—timed as the beams passed the bridge.

"They seemed to revolve about a distant centre which could not be clearly seen but appeared to be about five miles away," continues the incredible report. "The centre passed ahead of the ship, first being observed on the port beam, and from there drawing slowly ahead of and across the bows of the ship. It gradually faded off the starboard bow and the whole phenomenon disappeared about fifteen minutes after it began."

Most oceanic cartwheels have been seen as spinning lights shining up to the surface from the depths of the sea below as if the entire machine were a mass of lights. However, a few accounts have stated that the wheels have been seen diving under the surface of the water as observers approached closer!

The whole business is so astounding that it is peculiar that no scientific expedition has been outfitted to investigate these spinning wheels in the Indian Ocean more closely. Several conjectures have been offered by those who attempt to explain the riddle. One is that they are space-machines from another world or from outer space.

Many astronomers and physicists have stated that if a machine was constructed to travel through space, and it used radiation as its propulsive power, the best form would be a wheel!

And has anybody ever thought of Lemuria, the supposedly sunken continent in the Pacific? Perhaps, it is best to file the facts of this phenomenon among the unsolved riddles of this strange earth and forget the whole thing!

Grant M. Paterson
1524 Elford Street
Victoria, B. C.
Canada

Authorities:

1. "Nature's Bags of Tricks," C. F. Talman, Meteorologist, U. S. Weather Bureau. Reader's Digest, June, 1935, pp. 91. (Report of Steamer "Talma."
2. Editorial, "Are They Visitors from Mars?," Modern Wonder Magazine, London, England. March 26, 1938. (Ships' records to prove wheels had been sighted since before 1750 and accounts of wheels diving out of sight.)
3. Article, "Spinners in Ocean," Daily Colonist, Victoria, B. C. June 18, 1942. (General account of wheeled devices as observed by shipping masters in Indian Ocean.)

If these observations are as authentic as it would seem they are, judging from the authorities quoted, we should certainly NOT forget the whole thing! Can any of our readers add to this amazing bit of information?—Ed.

IS IT OCCULT?

Sirs:

You sure have asked for something when you went as far into the occult realm as you have in making something out of Richard Shaver's writing.

Also you open up the way for plenty when you ask for letters on "do you hear."

Do you realize that there are literally thousands of people in this country alone ranging from crackpots of one kind or another and the insane up to our most itelligent thinking men in all walks of life who hear voices—not imaginative ones either? Usually because of ridicule those people talk very little of such matters.

Now as to do I hear voices. Yes, I've heard them not once, but thousands of times. My ears are developed not only to take in the usual normal range, but my range is increased a great deal and where it lets off my clairaudient faculty begins.

You want to know what I've heard—well, what do you want to know about? Would you like to know what pixies say, brownies, elves, fairies, salamanders, denizens of the lower astral hells, the lower astral areas above the hells (where Shaver is getting his stuff) other astral areas, of the people of the summer land, the inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, what the dawn people say, what the entity ruling Mars, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Leo say, etc.? Do you want to know what the angels say, what the demons say, what the Christ spirit says, what the elementals in between the planes say, or shall we go on through more of the created universe and into the *uncreated universe* and see what mind there says.

It is merely a matter of centering my attention on some of the forms under man and those who have passed on but were in bodies before; and when one goes up into the realm of Deity in higher forms, such as the angels, a matter of invocation and earnest seeking to talk to and listen to them. There is nothing stupendous or mysterious about it.

Only few life forms talk. Communication flows freely by way of whatever intelligence exists in that entity or form and it isn't talking, it is merely thought flow of various types. I've even communicated with the entity that inhabits my diamond ring. Several of us have seen him with our naked eyes.

The whole universe, created and uncreated is open to communication by those who can center their attention and raise or lower their consciousness. I can and have. Only yesterday I had a look at a planet in the Milky Way, as yet unknown, and perhaps never will be known to Earth. So many light years away that we never see it.

I was able to communicate with those inhabitants merely by centering my attention on their consciousness. It is even possible to contact stones, lichens and mosses and communicate with them. Here is a rule that is true all the time. The negative or destructive side of the universe makes every attempt to communicate and talk to man, so man is swayed to do destructive things. The constructive side is always at the side of man to help and aid but never intrudes, that side of the universe has to be called in through the right kind of thought, invocation, supplication, etc.

Oahspe is mentioned. Yes, I talked to the entity who dictated it to Newbrough. I saw him also. He too is a denizen of what he speaks of in the book as the "Lower Astral Heavens." If you read the book you'll find it a remarkable plot factory for STF but as he told me the book is so composed of fact and fallacy that you will be a wise man if you can choose the fact. Remember it says in the Bible, "In the last days there shall be many false prophets," "and Satan shall be loosed from the Pit." That particular entity is one of them as are his worthy followers. He also told me he dictated the book for glorification of himself that would come through the groups that would accept *all* his teachings for truth. He also told me he would not dare give even his astral name since he had penetrated into higher realms for the truth he put in and because he combined it with falsity and partial truth he would not dare reveal his identity. He told me much more but likely you wouldn't be interested. I am in a position to demand truth and I got it.

Now as for this Lemurian stuff. That is what it is to me. I had an open mind when I read it since I know of numerous ways knowledge can readily come through in any ready human. I had hoped it would not be a *hoax* in any form. It wasn't more than a few pages reading that showed me where Shaver gets his imformation. I believe you as an editor are sincere. I even believe Shaver is sincere. But I can say I *know*, not believe, but know that Shaver merely wore down his normal, natural outer defenses which all people have and he laid himself open to lower astral entities to talk to him and act in such a way that he believed it to be the truth in all respects. Wiser men than Shaver have been duped. Some found it out, some never did. The insane asylums are full of people who are taken over with this sort of thing. They too wore their insulation down by one means or another and obsessing entities entered and called the mind their own and took over.

I am all for having occult tales appear in any STF mag, but I hope you won't open yourself up to the negative aspect of things.

Some of the letters warn you to stay away from telling what is not to be known now or ever. Well as for that. We are now coming into what is known as the Aquarian age. Aquarius is symbolized by the universal man pouring the water of life. The Aquarian age is under the entity ruling the planet Uranus. It is that strong Uranian urge that is now developing electricity so rapidly, produces all kinds of air travel and activity. Also it is the destructive side of Uranus that is producing all this destruction and the really big criminals. This coming age will be an opening up of all kinds of seemingly new knowledge, new isms, systems—both good and evil and humanity will have to learn what is best for it. You might as well start STF out in it too.

Now as for this business of Mr. Shaver remembering Lemuria. I believe he is sincere and the impressions as put in his mind he takes for "whole cloth." They are garbled and only partially true.

Incidentally races don't migrate from one planet to another, by way of bodies in space ships; why bother with a body or space ship when Deity sends the great angels out to produce the condition for a specific type of life and then it is merely a matter of the ego in pure spirit to migrate and build for itself a body of matter. We all have done it time after time.

We have records taken out of the astral light or Akasha as it is called, records that are as things happen. These records are read by thousands of people about the evolution of our planetary system which is one of the 7 we have come from, how egos migrate, evolve, finish their training on one planet and move on to the next one ready for their further experience. Earth is the last planet in *our* solar system to be used by us. We are likely going to Sirius, the Dog Star next, after our egos have received the necessary evolution.

You will find a chart herewith called evolution that gives something of the earth's past.

You are likely curious about the individual writing in such a manner.

To people looking on I have had a high school education, went to college and became a Doctor. Have had enough scientific training that I'm not swept off my mental equilibrium. The head of a prominent university in Pa. psychological department told me my brain would permit me to pass any college course in the U. S.

That is what people may see, but my life has been far fuller than that. I started searching the universe to see what and why. I studied college astronomy at 9. This expanded my consciousness somewhat. At about 10 I started reading E. R. Burroughs and from there on have been a STF fan. I have been mixing this with anatomy, chemistry, etc., and Carlysle, Emerson, etc. I have never stopped studying.

At about 20 I first developed some sense beyond the ordinary 5. My range of physical hearing, smelling and touch increased a great deal and I

finally developed what we call Spiritual Clairvoyance. With it goes hearing and knowing into the consciousness of all kinds and degrees of intelligence. The further I can expand my consciousness the further I can explore the universe. I've discovered several planets that science apparently knows nothing of.

Also I've been to Chicago and met quite a few of the writers of Science Fiction at the convention a few years ago. They are all pretty nice people. I find they are all sensitives. Merritt was also and a lot of his stuff was based on fact, as has Binder's stuff on the little people.

I can't imagine why all the furore over Lemuria. Thousands of people know of it. Many of us have searched the astral records and have seen back there.

Incidentally Panic is *not* the first language as Oahspe says. When people first started to speak out loud they spoke in the mother tongue of the modern Sanskrit. Before that they communicated by thought alone.

Dr. Thela Newcomer
32 W. 4th St., Suite 4,
Williamsport, Pa

"Evolution"

?,000,000,000—Polarian Epoch—began in the sun. Included 1st, 2nd and part of 3rd days of creation.

350,000,000—Hyperborean Epoch—Earth thrown off from sun. Remainder of 3rd and 4th days.

90-80,000,000—Condensation of oceans.

56,000,000—Moon thrown off from Earth.

56-43,000,000—Primal life. Archaesan time. Evolution of unicellular life.

41-31,000,000—Primitive life. Proterozoic time. Evolution of invertebrates.

31-12,500,000—Ancient life. Paleozoic time. Age of invertebrates, fish and amphibians.

12,500,000—Medieval life. Mesozoic time. Age of reptiles.

17-10,000,000—Lemurian Epoch. 5th day of creation. Mankind as spirit. Man first as spirit, then assuming a globular shape. Separation of sex occurs during this period. Reproduction heretofore unconscious act under control of higher mind (form of Deity). Earth a torrid tropical forest with dinosaurs, pterodactyls, triceratops, etc. Man as yet hardly in human forms. Death unconscious. Man lived in Lemuria, passed from lowest state of animal existence into rational human state. The adepts and masters developing from this low state established colonies in India. Their degenerate descendants went north, west, into Asia and Europe. Lemuria destroyed by terrible cataclysms. Japan and Spain (part only) remnants of Lemuria.

3,500,000—End of mesozoic time. Atlantean Epoch. Includes the 6th day of creation. Seven sub races, fourth great Root Race. Began in Lemurian Epoch. Continent destroyed by four great cataclysms and tidal wave. Subraces are:

1—Taechals, pale silver faces.
2—Tlavatlis, gold skin.
3—Tcltoos, red skin.
4—Turanians, composed of the first of the four yellow subraces.
5—Semites.
6—Akkadians.
7—Mongolians.

Toltecs colonized Yucatan, etc. Mayas here. They came from the west coast of Atlantis, spread over the entire continent. Redder in color than the Tlavatli, originally eight feet tall, features like modern Greeks. They were Atlanteans at their height of splendor and extended their empire to Mexico and Peru. The red Indians are their survivors, coming here by way of the Aleutian bridge a few hundred years B. C. from Asia.

Turanians specialized in magic and black arts.

Semites were the seed race of the Aryan Root Race. Settled in India, Gobi Desert, etc.

Akkadians settled in northern part of Egypt. Were a part of Mayan colonies further south.

3,500,000—To present time in Zenozoic Age embracing Tertiary Era of 3,000,000 years, the age of mammals, and end of the Quarternary Era or Age of Man.

3,100,000—1st Atlantean cataclysm and end of the Lemurian Epoch.

3,500,000—is the Tertiary Era or Age of Mammals.

to 516,000—Quarternary Era or Age of Man.

500,000—Pithecanthropus Man—so-called apeman.

391,000—Heidelberg Man.

268,000—Believed to be beginning of Mayan calendar.

200,000—2nd Atlantean cataclysm.

166,000—Piltdown Man.

87,000—3rd Atlantean cataclysm.

65,000—Neanderthal Man.

50,000—Cro-Magnon Man.

29,000—One of the possible dates for building of the Great Pyramid.

9,500—4th and last Atlantean cataclysm, the Great Flood of the Bible. Solar System in Zodiacal sign of Cancer (water).

6,727—Solar System in sign of Gemini (air) the Twins, indicative of the Dual Principle of life. Worship in India and Egypt is of the one God, the Absolute.

5,000—Time of Hermes Trismegistus.

4,500—Solar System in Taurus (Earth) symbolized by the head of the bull. Worship of Apis, the Bull, in Egypt, Bel, Baal, Moloch, etc.

3,550—Incarnation of supreme being as Buddha Shaucausan.

3,100—Passing away of SRI Krishna. Beginning of Kali Yuga or Iron Age.

2,433—Solar System in Aries, symbolized by the head of the Ram. Sacrifice of sheep took place of human sacrifice.

2,170—1st known initiation in Great Pyramid.

Aryan Epoch. 5th Great Root Race. Seven subraces, started back in Atlantean Epoch mainly under Toltecs and Semites, latter being real root of Race.

1—Indian and Asia.
2—Babylonian, Assyrian, Chaldean and Egyptian.
3—Persian and Iranian.
4—Graeco-Roman.
5—Celtic-Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon. 400 to 500 A. D. to present time. This is our place in the scales.

All of the Races and subraces overlap. As a rule there are always traces of one passing out, one in the height of development, one showing signs of the forerunners of that time to come. Also the same is true of the descendants of the Root Races. There are some of the 3rd dying races, the 4th passing out in the future, the 5th now here and possibility of the 5th in the great of the race. Forerunners of the 5th subraces are quite in evidence.

Your chart is certainly interesting, and it is easy to see how you can call much of Shaver's occultism. The voices you hear are far beyond anything we've run across (and we've had hundreds of letters from people who do hear voices, and they've told us what the voices say). And now that you've gone so far as to discuss these things so frankly, we'd like to ask a few questions. You mention talking to the author of Oahspe, or rather the spirit who dictated the book. Oahspe, has, by a new form of mathematics, been proved legitimate, and basically true. Is is not a collection of right and wrong, nor was it written (dictated) by the spirit you say you contacted. But the spirit you contacted WOULD say just what he did, if he knew it was the truth and didn't want it to be ACCEPTED as such! Now mind you, we are only repeating what some of our confidants have told us, while staying strictly within the rights to repeat that they gave us, but necessarily withholding the source. Obviously between these correspondents and yourself there is an exact difference of opinion, and frankly, you are outnumbered 100 to 1. Could it be you have contacted one of your "false prophets"? Assuming that you are telling the truth, and we believe you are, in the same way that Shaver is, on what basis do you say "I am in a position to demand truth"? Logically, now, are you? It is illogical to believe that among all your voices there is not at least one liar. However, please do not think we are trying to deny what you say, or insult you. We got a great thrill out of your letter, and your apparent willingness to be open before all our readers. You are a fine person in that respect, and we can appreciate your letter more than you can imagine. You must see that we are the kind of people who are skeptical and who are instantly ready to challenge the unknown—and to your editors, this IS the unknown, and HOW! And what IS the mother tongue of the modern Sanskrit? Please keep on reading Shaver's stories and write us when you have something further to say. Every little bit adds something.—ED.

ATTENTION "TAN BET"

Will the reader who signed himself "Tan Bet" contact this editor again? We fully understand his caution in not revealing his identity, but we assure him that his identity would be kept strictly confidential. He will do himself a great error if he does not allow us to communicate certain knowledge to him which is vitally important to him—and also, allow us to convince him that anything he knows should not be kept secret.—Ed.

AMAZING LETTER

Sirs:

I sincerely hope that Mr. Shaver's intentions are good because it is clear that he has come into certain powerful knowledge from the past. Let me make clear these points. The tablets referred to were buried by Thoth. They have since been dug up and are at present in Tibet. Mr. Shaver will never find them.

The Atlanteans and Lemurians were two different places and races. Both were wiped out by the great Masters because of failure to obey cosmic laws. The last remnants of the Lemurians are locked in a great cavern in the earth along with other der or negative creatures and can not be reached by any ordinary mortal, for which I give thanks to the Cosmos.

About Shasta—it is not peopled by Lemurians, although some of those who dwell there are centuries old. You may make inquiries if you wish, however you will not learn much unless the great ones wish it. The masters have seven great caverns in scattered places throughout the earth.

There were other elder races besides the Lemurians and the Atlanteans. One of these was the Xians, who came from a dark planet. As to travel in space, it can be done if one travels through curves but not through angles. I welcome inquiry in the proper spirit and will answer letters from anyone who is sincere.

Alden M. Scrum
P. O. Box 625
Williams, Ariz.

Your editor is sincere—and he'd like to know everything you know. That may be asking a lot, but he'd appreciate anything you can tell him. In return, he'll tell you other things he learns that you may not know. For instance, please explain this space-travel business—about curves and not angles. Another question—your mention of SEVEN caves agrees with other letters. The number seven is significant. How do you know there are seven, and where do you get that knowledge? Please, more about Thoth!

This ends Report From The Forgotten Past for this issue. Watch for the next issue!—Ed.

DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

HE WAS A SWELL GUY

Sirs:

I picked up the June issue of AMAZING STORIES on the stands yesterday, thumbed through the pages looking for what might be there to see, reached the Discussions page and thumbed no more. Dave was dead. Dave . . .

I don't know how long I stood there on the street, looking at the magazine but not really seeing it, not seeing the people jostling me, seeing instead the B-17 going down, seeing the sky overhead and the dark earth below, seeing a man trying to fight his way out, trying and failing, seeing the ship hit, exploding. Dave . . . Dear God . . .

I can't say what I think, I can't say what I feel. I am conscious mostly of the sensation of not feeling, a sort of heavy numbness, and anger. Damn those Germans! Damn them! I feel so futile saying this, but the words go round and round in my head.

Dave was such a swell guy. No, I'm not just speaking well of the dead. He actually was all the things everyone says about a man who has gone over. I quite agree with your estimate of his writing ability. He was one of those rare people who get magic out of words. A lot of us can hack out a story, but when he hacked one out, it just wasn't the ordinary story. It always had that something else, that touch of magic, which lifts a story out of the rut. He would have gone far.

Well, he has gone far, and maybe sometime . . . You know I was looking forward to the time when I would go to Chicago and . . . I won't be seeing Dave, though, when I make that trip. Dear God! There are things in this world that aren't right.

Robert Moore Williams
Military Secret
U. S. A.

REVERSE GRAVITY AGAIN

Sirs:

Permit me to thank you for putting me straight by publishing my letter in the June issue of AMAZING STORIES, regarding my original mimeographed pamphlet, "Mysterious Gravitation, or A New Field Theory." Also your kindly remarks regarding my theory of the cause of gravitation, curved space, electric charge, etc., as explained in this pamphlet.

I think your "Thought Records of Lemuria" quite fascinating as science fiction and it is not at all surprising that Lemuria stories have stirred up so many interesting letters and comments.

J. P. Kayne
R417
4518 Clarendon Ave.
Chicago 40, Illinois

Readers who are interested in Mr. Kayne's theories (he has been a science fiction fan for many years) can obtain his mimeographed pamphlet for $1.00 by writing to him. We are always glad to pass on news of constructive work on the part of our science-minded readers.—Ed.

A PLAN CONCERNING LEMURIA

Sirs:

It has long been my opinion that the knowledge of Atlantis and Lemuria is divided among thousands of people. Like a giant jig-saw puzzle everyone has but one piece but no contact with the people who know of or have the missing pieces.

It is time that those of you who possess knowledge of these two great continents be brought together that you may correspond and solve the mystery that surrounds Atlantis and Lemuria and here is my plan. If you think this is a good idea then sit right down and write me a letter, telling me of your discoveries and opinions. Submit any evidence you may have on the subject, whether it be psychic, racial memory, fact, or what have you.

If this appeal brings any appreciable response, I in turn will publish a monthly bulletin which will contain my findings, your questions, interpretations, etc.

This publication would put you in touch with the people who have ideas like your own with whom you can correspond in an attempt to solve the mystery of Atlantis and Lemuria.

David D. Dagmar
1345 North Hayworth
Hollywood 46, Calif.

Here's a reader who is willing to do a lot of work on the mysteries of Atlantis and Lemuria, which seem to have a connection also with the Shaver Mystery. The editors of this magazine are quite interested in his plan, and we would be quite interested in knowing the results. May we offer the pages of our magazine as part of the evidence you are attempting to collect, Mr. Dagmar, and

please accept our hope that our readers will respond to your plea? The results should be extremely interesting, and we hope you'll keep us posted. Put us down for that monthly bulletin if you decide that it is necessary to publish it.—Ed.

EARTH SHAKING DISCOVERIES

Sirs:

I am following with great interest your "Lemurian Series." I really believe that Mr. Shaver and you are on the verge of making some earth shaking discoveries which may definitely change all present-day written history and quite possibly change the future of the human race.

Regarding the "caves" I would like to make reference to several possible links to the caves and their inhabitants. My first reference is to the section of AMAZING STORIES entitled "Scientific Mysteries." In this section there appeared an article by Mr. L. Taylor Hansen discussing the mysterious Tuaraks of North Africa. In this article Mr. Hansen states the ancient legends concerning the huge underground cities of this ancient and mysterious race and of their own story of having emigrated from a region either west of the Atlantic or now submerged beneath it. This mysterious race does not permit or desire contact with the outside world.

Secondly I read several years ago an article by a Russian explorer of his explorations in Tibet, Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan. I believe his name was a Professor Roerich. In this article he described in great detail the legends of huge underground cities and caves and of how a person if he was familiar with these caves and underground passages might travel thousands of miles underground to far distant countries. These legends were quite persistent among the various races and tribes of the aforementioned territories. Regarding these same territories, I believe Col. James Churchward states that the ancient Uighur Empire occupied the present territories of Mongolia, Turkestan (Russian and Chinese or Eastern) and upper Tibet. The ancient Uighurs were a colony of the ancient empire of Mu.

My third reference is the unknown region of the Matto Grosso in Brazil. In this region are believed to be the cities or ruins which are remnants of ancient Mu or Atlantis.

I wish also to point out that the above three possible links are in territories which are at present a total blank as far as definite information is concerned. From all indications of the ancient legends and relatively few facts which have been obtained from these forbidden territories, I believe that when these territories are fully explored and the information and historical records of these territories are finally compiled we will have a fairly accurate and definite historical record of Mu, Atlantis, and more.

The trouble seems to be that these territories are tabu as far as the outside world is concerned. I am positive that they contain the links or keys and verification of Mr. Shaver's stories and the history of mankind. I wonder if these territories are tabu and inaccessible due to any influence of the "deros" of the caves in order to prevent the progress of modern man?

John M. Matthews
517 West 160th St., Apt. 11
New York 32, N. Y.

You have hit upon three definite links, much of which material has already proved very valuable in tieing this whole thing up into a cohesive whole. AMAZING STORIES will eventually publish a brief "history" of mankind based on these discoveries, known records, Mr. Shaver's material, and a great deal more being collected from readers. We believe this file of material to be unique in the world, and the most amazing collection ever gotten together. Naturally, however, this entails a great deal of work to assemble, and we will have to depend on the free time of the various writers and experts to whom we are giving the opportunity to weld it into a "history" replete with references and proofs that scientists who delve into the earth will find it difficult to refute.

We might point out that Churchward's "lost city" in Burma, the great metropolis for the safekeeping of the knowledge of ancient Mu, has been discovered by the U. S. Air Force, and exploration only waits the end of the Jap war. What we may discover there is of vast interest to your editor, personally, because of the evidence he has received pointing that way. The whole secret of man's origin may be buried beneath that city!—Ed.

A CAVE DISCOVERED?

Sirs:

Near the city of Cuzco stands the old Incan fort, Sacsayhuaman. In one spot amidst the crumbling stones is a low dark opening leading into the bowels of the earth. In the year 1850 or '51, seven students of the Cuzco University entered the forbidding dark hole That was the last that was ever seen of them. The authorities then ordered the entrance walled up. The rumor that the famous Cuzco treasure of the Jesuit Fathers may be here is incentive enough for an exploration party. Another story of the Jesuit Fathers' treasure is of more interest because of the actions of the treasure hunter. This fellow found a hill exactly as described in an ancient manuscript and at one side discovered a concealed entrance to a tunnel. Within this he came upon barricaded doors, a cross and a document ordering or rather warning all to keep away. This document actually stated that beyond the doors was the vast treasure. Why did he not go farther is a little vague to *some*. He actually turned back from the barrier, went to England, sold shares of treasure hunting stock, and returned to Bolivia with abundant means and equipment. But *for some reason*—perhaps fear of hostile Indians (who did not exist) or of robbers (who are just as rare in that sector),

(Continued on page 177)

CABLE TRAIN OF TOMORROW

By HENRY GADE

Now that Europe's railroads have been smashed by warring armies, perhaps these cable trains will replace them.

(See back cover)

ARTIST James B. Settles, continuing his series of future transportation paintings, gives us a remarkably prophetic preview of something that may not be many months in the future, considering the degree of destruction of European railroads, and the problem of fianancing reconstruction of the transportation arteries of that continent, it seems very probable that such trains as these suspended cable cars will be constructed.

Considering the financial angle first, construction of these cable roads would save a great deal of money through the elimination of the necessity of building expensive roadbeds, of acquiring the right of way, and of solving the shortage of materials and transportation of those materials to the scene. Europe's industries are hardly in shape to launch into such enormous construction jobs. The manufacture of steel alone would be a tremendous job.

In the case of the metals used in the supporting towers, these would be made of light alloys, and would be pre-fabricated and welded together on the spot, make the construction of many hundreds of miles of towers an easy job. The tonnage of metal required would be considerably less than in making rails for railroads tracks, and each of the towers would be not less than a quarter of a mile apart.

Two metal cables would provide the "tracks" on which the cable train would travel.

The great saving, naturally, would come in construction of the cars, which would be built along the same lines as aircraft, of very light alloys, and constructed to save weight.

By an arrangement of adjustable wheels, so made as to provide for the outswing of the car in making a turn, it would be possible for these trains to maintain an even speed, with no requirement of slowing down for curves. The only result, in so far as the passengers are concerned would be in an increased pressure against the floor. Their sense of balance would be in relation to the direction of the pressure, and the ride would be even and no bumps would be experienced. All crossings of points where cables are suspended would result in little jogs which would be taken up by the hydraulic springs in the wheels.

Propulsion would be by means of jet motors, which are extremely economical to build and as economical to operate. Two of these motors would be mounted on each car, one on each side.

It is a misnomer, however, to call these cars "trains" because they would not travel that way. Each car would be a train in itself, and it would be impossible to integrate them to form trains of cars because of their method of travel. Each car would be built on the principle of a giant aircraft without wings, powered by jet motors mounted in the position that would be occupied by wings if it were an aircraft. Literally, the car would be an aircraft, and some provision would be made to keep the car from lifting off its cables. This could be done in two ways, by small fins designed to hold the car down, and by arrangements on the wheels that would provide a "captivator" rod or wheel beneath the large wheel on which the car travels.

Tremendous speed would be impossible, however, and speeds in excess of sixty miles an hour would be impractical, because of the tendency of the car to "bounce" or travel at various levels due to the sag of the cables that support it. However, these trains would be for passenger travel only, and possibly, only as feeder lines and suburban lines surrounding large cities.

Built in this country, the cars could be so constructed that they would be seaworthy also, and when approaching a large lake, such as the Great Lakes, could take to the water, and skim over the surface much as a large power launch. For this purpose, each car would be provided with water controls, such as a rudder and with a slanting prow to keep it riding high in the water. Once across the lake, the car would take to the air again, via its cables, and proceed on its way.

The inside of these cars would be as luxurious as the most modern of parlor cars, completely air conditioned, and provided with observation windows permitting a marvelous view. In the future, they may become pleasure ride conveyances rather than pure transportation means.

★ BUY WAR BONDS ★

DISCUSSIONS

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(Continued from page 175)

a large part of his equipment consisted of firearms and ammunition, *including* (now mind you) a machine gun. He never got to the hill for the authorities arrested him, saying he was trying to aid revolutionists. Verrill, the famous archeologist, in whose book I read of this incident, stated he did not know the outcome. One sure thing this man never got to those barricaded doors. Why did he turn back when the treasure was within his grasp, and most important of all, why did he return so fully armed?

I heartily agree with Wesley and Bruce Herschensohn. Of course some being was taking advantage of the turtle's death in order to impart information. For hundreds of years the Chinese have said they came from the moon. I wish you would print their other theories.

Miss Eleanore Kramer
1239 W. 32nd Pl.
Chicago 8, Illinois

What you say is highly interesting. Coming from such a reputable man as A. Hyatt Verrill, we can be sure that it is not simply a loose tale of imagination. Mr. Verrill is given to reporting only the facts as he knows them. Yes, we believe that it is quite true that caves exist under these ruins, and also that it is possible for them to be presently inhabited by some sort of human beings, whether they are Shaver's dero people or not. This is something that can definitely be checked, if it becomes necessary. The two barricaded doors, or entrances to caves, should be easy to rediscover.—Ed.

THE NECROMINICON

Sirs:

In line with your research on the Lemurian question, may I refer you to the "Necrominicon" of Abdul Alhazred, and also, the singularly famous "Das Inausprechlichen Kulten" by Von Juntz.

Both of these volumes may be found in the reserve room of Miskatonic University's library at Arkton, Massachusetts.

I am a graduate in occult sciences of this university, and have been engaged in conflict with Mr. Shaver's "underground deros" since my graduation there in 1935.

Translation of the seventh chapter of the "Necrominicon" using the "Lemurian alphabet" should aid greatly in discovering the missing plates.

I regret deeply that a certain interest in the (deleted by the editor for very good reasons) keeps me from aiding you materially in your search, but a hint to so fertile a brain as Mr. Shaver's should be enough. And I feel quite sure that after you have read the above-mentioned volumes, many things should be clear that are now confused and dark.

John Poldea
(address deleted)

Your editor now has several hundred books to read, many of them as hard to get hold of as the two you mention—and he doesn't know when he'll get to read them all, but eventually he will. Meanwhile, we print this letter, with certain wise deletions even though you mentioned nothing about publishing them, so that any of our readers who can undertake some of this research may do so and report to us. Personally, we are writing you further regarding some mysterious statements you made, and we have an idea that your "certain interest" may be a mutual one. Your use of quotation marks around "underground deros" interests us greatly, because it is exactly what we would have done, knowing what we know now! If this means anything to you, we'd welcome another letter from you, this one personal and not for publication. —Ed.

CAVE HUNTERS!

Sirs:

Mr. Shaver's story in AMAZING STORIES has aroused our deep interest by its reference to large caves, etc., due to the fact that the National Speleological Society consists of people who have, in their leisure time, discovered, studied, and mapped thousands of miles of caves, and we simply drool at the slightest mention of a hole in the ground.

As we haven't yet run into anything such as Mr. Shaver mentioned, we wonder if this was a figment of his imagination (if so, he did a magnificent job) or if he really had a basis for his claims and had in mind particular caves or special sections of the country.

For our records, and in the interest of science, we could be grateful for any information you are at liberty to give us on the matter.

If at any time you can use our services or information on caves, please feel free to call on us.

Betty A. Yoe
Secretary
The Cleveland Grotto of
The National Speleological Soc.
2618 E. 89th St.
Cleveland 4, Ohio

Your group is an intensely interesting one, and we are sorry that we can't provide you with the information you want, but we are keeping you in mind, just as soon as we get a strong (and safe) lead. In your work, have you ever considered the Mound Builders of Ohio? We have definitely linked them with the Shaver Mystery, and it seems that the Mound Builders records, when studied, may offer corroborative clues to the ancient people of Mu.—Ed.

MT. SHASTA

Sirs:

I have just finished the newest issue of AMAZING STORIES. I find the discussion about Mr. Shaver's story very interesting. Things of that sort have always fascinated me. This story has more than half convinced me of its truth, or at least of a basis of truth.

I know of something which you may find interesting, and possibly a bit of a help on the subject of the underground caverns of which Mr. Shaver speaks.

There is said to be, and I firmly believe it, a strange tribe of people living in the interior of Mt. Shasta in Northern California. I say the interior, for numerous searching parties have covered the slopes and crags of Mt. Shasta and found nothing. There are instances, however, of small groups disappearing there and not being found again. Perhaps they found the entrances and the inhabitants have not seen fit to let them return with their story.

These people are tall, quite impressive in appearance, and when they have been seen, have been dressed in robes similar to those worn by the Yoga sects of India.

They descend the mountain rather infrequently. Sometimes one or two of them have come to the little village of Shasta on the lower slopes. They make a few purchases, always paying for them in gold dust, or bullion.

One instance of the appearance of these men, women of the tribe have never been seen, was just after the Japanese earthquake a number of years ago. At that time they descended, went to San Francisco, and turned over to the Japanese consul there a large amount in gold to be used for the relief of the stricken people.

There was quite a bit in the San Francisco Examiner and the Chronicle at that time, I believe. I have talked to a number of people about it. I did not read it myself, I was a very small child at the time. You could undoubtedly get verification of this from the files of that period at the newspaper offices in San Francisco.

I have seen the lights at night on the top of Shasta. Once I saw what appeared to be quite a long row of them winding down the mountain nearly at the top. They were very small from where I was watching, but it seemed to me it was a procession of people bearing lights. The string of lights gave that impression.

Any one in the little town of Shasta or the surrounding territory, particularly the older people, can confirm my story of these things. That is, they can if they will. They are sometimes a little reluctant to talk of them.

I hope this item will at least be of some interest to you.

Harriet Ware
451 Lugo Street
San Bernardino, Calif.

This certainly is of interest to us. We'd like to know a great deal more—and any of our readers who can help us gather together the information are asked to do it if they can. We would especially like copies of the articles in the San Francisco papers. You are not the only one who has told us of the Shasta people, and also of a people living in Mt. Rainier in the same state. Let's find out more about it.—Ed.

CONFIRMATION FROM INDIA

Sirs:

After living many years in North India, and becoming not only able to speak the language, but by living in the native part of Lahore, and so winning the confidence of the people, I at long last got them to tell me something of the whispered secrets they have concerning the Sogpas, the mysterious Snowmen. The story is not pure imagination, and I suggest that you look up the Life of Appolonius of Tyana by Philostratus for yourself. His adventures in India were certainly not all buncombe since the recent excavations at Taxila reveal that the descriptions of that city in the Life of the Stoic sage agree with the actual appearance of the ruins. He had certainly been in that long-buried city of the first century, A. D. Nor do I fancy that the adventures related in that old book in the cave of the sages were made up out of whole cloth. Some day we may find that wonderful cave, and then much that has puzzled us in Indian legend will be made clear.

E. J. Jenkinson
Parker, Colorado

Heaven help your editor—one more book to read! But we've given up stamp collecting, and this Shaver Mystery is our new week-end hobby! Yes, we believe there is a great deal of connection with the Shaver matter, and India gets a great deal of its legend from ancient Mu.—Ed.

IMPORTANT!

Sirs:

Your story, "I Remember Lemuria!" is great! But in it I notice that the records made by Mutan Mion seem to be missing. Have you ever read Churchward's works on Lemuria? If not, do so by all means. You may learn something in re those records. It might be that he saw a few of them! As to the speed of light not being a limiting speed, I have long thought so! And the nature of gravity fits in somewhat with my own ideas as to the formation of matter.

R. W. Bond
P. O. Box 822
Calexico, Calif.

Will you be so kind as to write us and tell us more of your theories of light and gravity? It may be vastly important! Your letter hits on something we'll explain if you care to know.—Ed.

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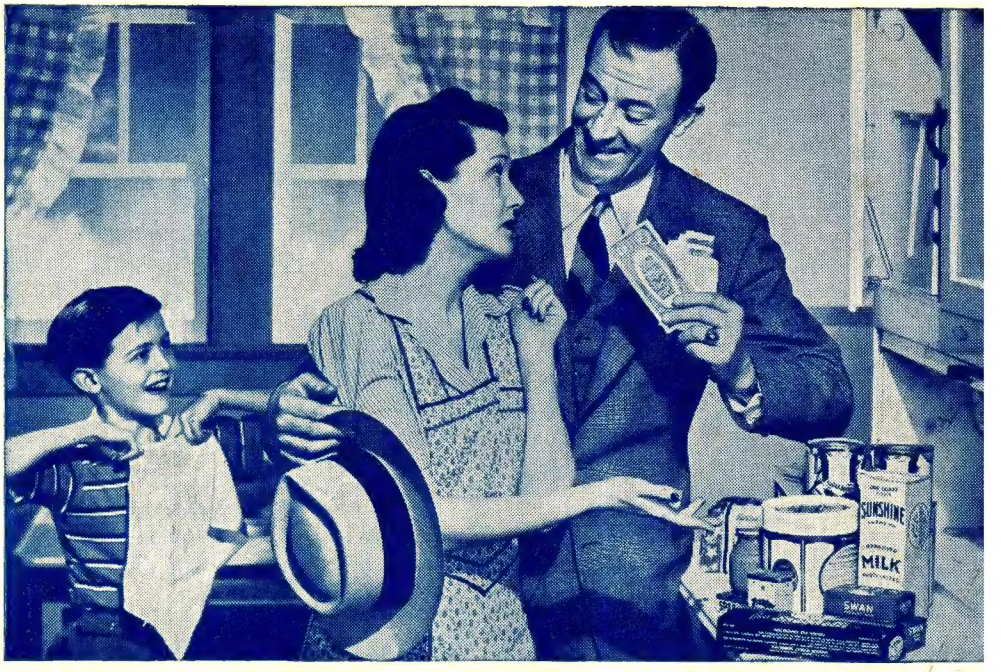

What good is a $10.00 raise . . . if it then costs you $12.00 more to live?

SURE WE ALL want a raise . . . but raises today are bad medicine. And here's why... Suppose you do get a raise . . . and a lot of others get one, too. What happens? The cost of manufacturing goes up. Naturally your boss has to add this increase in cost to the price he asks the retailer. And the retailer, in turn, raises his price to the consumer . . . that's YOU.

So what good is a raise if your living costs go up even faster?

Of course, it's hard to give up the luxuries of life . . . and even harder to give up some of the necessities. But this is War! And when you think of the sacrifices our fighting men are making . . . many of them giving up their lives for us . . . no sacrifice we can make should be too great.

So . . . start doing these seven things now . . .

1. **Buy only what you need.** Take care of what you have.
2. **Don't try to profit from the war.** Don't ask more than you absolutely *must* for what you have to sell.
3. **Pay no more than ceiling prices.** Buy rationed goods only by exchanging stamps.
4. **Pay taxes willingly.**
5. **Pay off your old debts**—all of them.
6. **If you haven't a savings account,** start one. If you have an account, put money in it—regularly. Put money in life insurance, too.
7. **Buy and hold War Bonds.** Don't stop at 10%.

Use it up . . . Wear it out.
Make it do . . . Or do without.

HELP US KEEP PRICES DOWN

A United States War message prepared by the War Advertising Council; approved by the Office of War Information; and contributed by the Magazine Publishers of America.

CABLE TRAIN OF TOMORROW

This suspended cable car is a very possible development of the future for overland travel, due to the cheap construction costs. (See page 176)